WITH THE ALLIES TO PEKIN

A STORY OF THE RELIEF OF THE LEGATIONS

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THE TIGER SEIZED HIM BY THE SHOULDER.

WITH THE ALLIES TO PEKIN

A TALE OF

THE RELIEF OF THE LEGATIONS

BY

G. A. HENTY

Author of "With Roberts to Pretoria" "Redskin and Cowboy"
"With the British Legion" &c.

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PREFACE

The campaign which ended with the relief of the Pekin Legations is unique in its way, carried on as it was by an army made up of almost all the nationalities of Europe. The quarrel originated in the rising of a mob of ruffians who were known by us under the name of Boxers. The movement spread like wildfire, and soon developed into the wholesale massacre of the missionaries of Northern China. The Empress, seeing the formidable nature of the rising, and hoping to gain by it the expulsion of all foreigners from her dominions, allied herself with the Boxers, besieged the various Legations, and attacked Tientsin, which stands upon the river by which the trade with Pekin is carried on. Admiral Seymour, with a force of little over a thousand men, marched to the relief of the Legations. The railway, however, was cut both before and behind him, and after severe fighting he retired upon a Chinese fortress a few miles from Tientsin, where he maintained himself until he was relieved by another force which had arrived by sea and had destroyed the forts at the mouth of the river. Tientsin itself was captured by the allies after one day's hard fighting, and the army then advanced to the relief of the Legations. The opposition they met with was trifling in comparison with that which they had encountered at Tientsin, and they arrived at Pekin not a moment too soon. It was found that the Legations had been very hard pressed, some of them having

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been destroyed by fire. But the garrison had maintained a heroic defence, aided by the native Christians who had escaped the massacre and taken refuge with them, and who had done excellent work in the building and constant repair of the defences, sometimes under the heavy fire of the enemy. The Empress had fled, but negotiations were opened with her and terms of peace were ultimately agreed to. For the particulars of the campaign I have relied chiefly upon *The War of the Civilizations,* by George Lynch, *China and the Powers,* by H. C. Thomson, and *The Siege of Pekin Legations,* by the Rev. Roland Allen, M. A.

G. A. HENTY.

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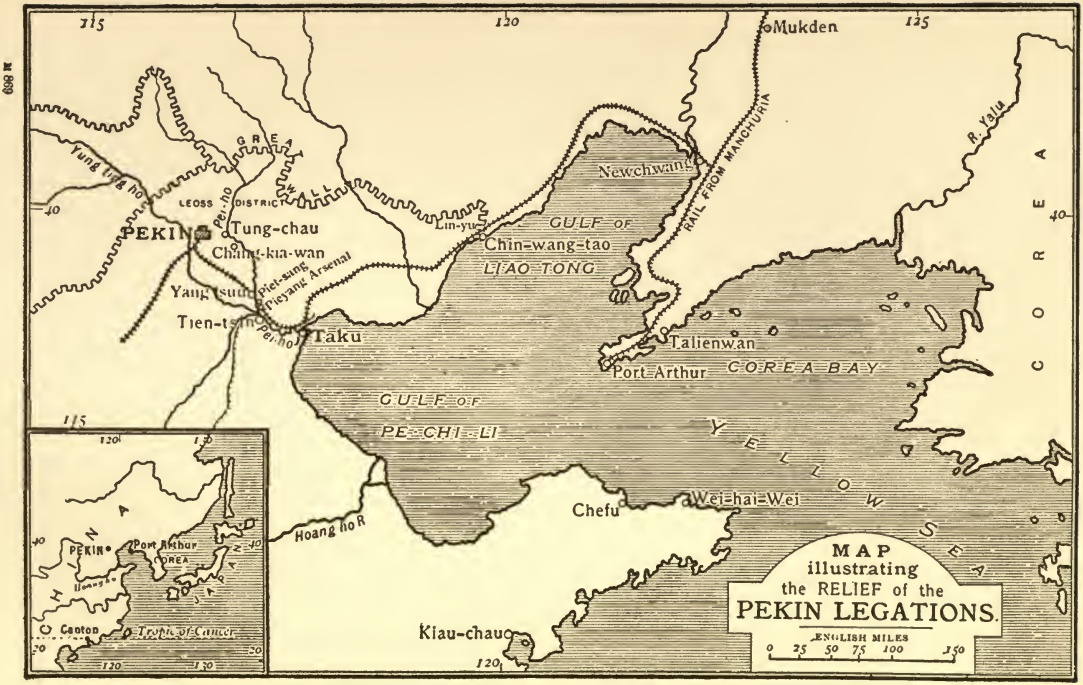
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LEOSS DISTRICT
Pei-ho
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Yang tsun
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COREA BAY
GULF OF
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WITH THE ALLIES TO PEKIN

CHAPTER I

SCHOOL

"WELL, Rex, how do you think you will like school?"

"I don't know very much about it yet, Uncle. You told me that I was to expect to be bothered and bullied a bit just at first, but it was not so bad as I supposed. I was asked a lot of questions, and when I said I had been taken to China when I was a year old and lived there ever since, they gave me the nickname of the Heathen Chinee at once. Of course I did not mind that at all. You told me that probably they would give me a nickname of some sort, and that was just as good as another. Anyhow, after the first two days they let me alone. I came off better than some of the other new boys, who got out of temper to begin with; so I expect it is all over as far as I am concerned now."

"I expect so, Rex. The boy who takes things good-temperedly is soon left alone."

The speakers were Mr. Bateman and his nephew Reginald, who was always known as Rex. They had landed at Southampton a month before. Mr. Bateman, who was a member of a firm of merchants at Tientsin, had returned to England to take up the management of the London house, the senior partner having died. Rex was the son of James, the younger brother of the two remaining partners. As soon as it had

been arranged that the elder brother should return to England, it was agreed that he should take Rex with him. It had for some time been a settled thing that the boy should come home for three or four years in order to associate with English boys and learn their ways, and at the end of that time should return to China and begin to learn the business. Robert, now the chief partner, was unmarried, and as it was therefore probable that Rex would some day become in turn the head of the firm, both his father and uncle were anxious that he should be prepared as far as possible for that position.

Rex would have been sent over sooner had they not been afraid that he might altogether forget Chinese, which he now spoke as well as English. From his early childhood he had been principally under the charge of a Chinaman named Ah Lo, who had been chosen from among the Chinese servants for that post. Ah Lo had at that time been a strong young fellow of eighteen years of age, intelligent and good-tempered. He was the son of the native storekeeper, and the child had taken to him. The choice had been a good one. The lad had watched over his charge with the care of a woman. He regarded it as a great honour to have been chosen for the post, and was never so happy as when he took the child out, perched on his shoulder, or rowed him about in a sampan. As he grew up Rex had to spend half of his time at his books, and his mother kept him a good deal with her, as it was as necessary that he should speak English perfectly, and receive the usual education, as that he should speak Chinese perfectly. And then, when it was decided that his uncle should return to England, it was at once agreed that Rex should accompany him.

"I should be glad," his father said, "if he could go to a great public school, and then to one of the universities; but

there are two objections to that course. In the first place, when he was finished he would be less inclined to settle down to office work here; and in the second place, he would entirely forget Chinese. He might pick it up again, but he would never come to speak it like a native—an accomplishment which would unquestionably be a very great advantage to him in many ways. You and I, Robert, can get on fairly well, but we help our Chinese largely with pidgin English, and often feel the disadvantage of not being able to talk fluently to the people in their own language. Of course I quite agree with you that it is necessary for Rex to mix with English boys of his own age, and become in all respects like them, but I am sorry to think that in four years he will have lost a great deal of his Chinese."

"I have been thinking of that too, James, and my idea is that it would be a good thing to take Ah Lo to England with us. He is very much attached to the boy, and the boy to him."

"Yes," the other said doubtfully, "that is so; but it would not be possible to have Ah Lo with him when he is at school."

"Quite impossible, James; the boy's life, even if it could be managed, would be made a burden to him. No, I should propose that Ah Lo should remain with me. He is a useful fellow in many respects, and when Rex is engaged with his lessons, he, like most of his countrymen, can turn his hand to anything. My idea is that we arrange with the master of the school to let Rex off two afternoons and evenings in the week. He could then meet Ah Lo at the railway-station, or at some other place a little distance from the school, and could go out for walks with him, and if there is a river, go on the water, or make an excursion by rail. In that way, as they would be together for five or six hours twice a week,

Rex could keep up his Chinese. Of course I should choose some school within a reasonable distance of London. I shall probably take a house eight or ten miles out of town, near Surbiton, or somewhere in that direction. We have agreed that Rex cannot go to one of the great public schools, as, although perhaps better read in English literature and history than most boys of his age, he is backward in Latin and mathematics. Still, I could find some good school, say within ten or fifteen miles of my house. Moreover, the plan I suggest could not be carried out at a public school. It would not be permissible, at such an institution, for boys to break through the ordinary routine, but I have no doubt that I could make the arrangement I propose at what you may call a good school, other than Harrow, or Eton, or Winchester."

"It would certainly be a capital plan, Robert."

"Of course I should see that his off-days were not the half-holidays, because we want him to learn to play cricket and football, and he would be out of it altogether if he were to lose the half-holidays. I see no reason why the plan should not be carried out. In that way he would keep up the language, and at the same time would take part in the games played in the school. In winter I should arrange for the use of a comfortable room in the town, where they could sit and talk. I shall let Ah Lo wear his native clothes, if he likes, at my place; but when he goes to meet Rex I shall put him into European costume and make him twist his pigtail up and hide it under his hat. If any of Rex's school chums were to see the boy about with a Chinaman, he would never hear the end of it."

On his arrival in England Mr. Bateman had taken a furnished house near Surbiton, and had made the arrangements he wished for Rex at a large school near the river, some fifteen miles away. Rex had now returned at the end of his

first fortnight. He was soon at home in his new life, and ere long became very popular among the boys of his own age. His good temper was unfailing, for although at first he was somewhat awkward in the games, he very speedily picked them up. As usual with new boys, he had one or two fights, and came out of them fairly well. Several of the boys learned boxing from a sergeant in the Guards, who came down from Windsor twice a week to teach them. Rex asked that he might be allowed to take lessons, and his uncle readily agreed.

"Certainly you may do so, Rex, and I am glad to find that you have the opportunity of learning how to use your hands. It is a valuable accomplishment for anyone, for it develops self-reliance and quickness of eye, strengthens the muscles, and improves the figure and carriage, and besides, it enables a man to hold his own in any circumstances; lastly, it is of special benefit to anyone living abroad and liable to aggression or insult. An Englishman who can box well is a match for any two foreigners knowing nothing of the art, and need not fear the attack of any one man unless he is carrying firearms. I intended to propose that you should take lessons in the holidays, but as you can do so at school, by all means begin at once. Keep regularly at it, and the last year before you go back to China you shall have lessons from one of the best masters I can find."

Rex found himself very backward, so he set to work hard to repair his deficiencies, and had the satisfaction, at the end of the first term, of getting a remove into a higher form, where the boys were for the most part about his own age. At first many questions had been asked as to the reason why he was allowed to get off school two afternoons in the week; and when he said that as he would return to China when he left school, it was necessary that he should keep up a knowledge

of the language, there was a good deal of amusement. Once or twice in his walks with Ah Lo he came across some of the boys, who were fond of hunting for plants or insects, and he was a good deal chaffed at Ah Lo's appearance.

"I thought he would have been dressed in Chinese clothes," said one of his friends, "with little turn-up-toe shoes, and a skull-cap with a peacock's feather in it, but he is really quite an ordinary-looking chap. He is a big fellow, and of course of a yellowish-brown complexion, with queerly-shaped eyes, which make him look as if he squinted; but he seems very good-natured."

"He has got a pig-tail, but he wears it under his coat," said another.

"I should think that he would be an awkward customer in a tussle. I had no idea the Chinese were such big fellows, Bateman."

"They differ in height in some of the Provinces, but a great many of them are tall, and very strong. You should see them loading a ship or carrying things through the streets. They can carry a good deal heavier weight than most English sailors. They are generally very good-tempered, but they get into a tremendous state of excitement sometimes, and holla and shout at each other so, that you would think they would tear each other to pieces; but it is not often that they really come to blows."

At the beginning of the next term Ah Lo distinguished himself. He had been for a long walk up the river-bank with Rex, when they saw three of the boys of the school rowing. A barge was coming down, towed by a horse. There was plenty of room inside for the boat to pass, and the rope was trailing in the water, but just as they were about to row over it the man who was riding the horse suddenly quickened his pace. The rope immediately tightened, and catching the bow

of the boat turned it over, throwing the boys into the water. The driver and a bargee, who was walking on the bank near them, burst into shouts of loud laughter. The boys could all swim, and as the overturned boat was but twelve yards from the bank, they soon clambered up. They at once made for the driver and furiously accused him of upsetting them on purpose. The fellows laughed boisterously, and the boys, losing their tempers, made a rush towards them. At this moment Ah Lo and Rex arrived on the scene. They had witnessed the whole affair, and had run up. The Chinaman, without hesitation, brought his stick down on the head of the driver of the horse, levelling him to the ground, but breaking the weapon in his hand. The bargee made a sudden rush. Ah Lo had no idea of fighting, but with a wild shout he threw himself upon the man, striking, shouting, scratching, and kicking.

The bargee was taken wholly by surprise at such a novel assault, and stepped farther and farther back till Ah Lo, seeing his opportunity, clasped him by the waist and hurled him into the river.

"You bery bad man," he exclaimed, "to strikee lillee boy! You upsettee piecee boat; you comee out Ah Lo breakie you head."

The bargee stood with the water up to his waist. He did not like the look of this strange adversary, who had, moreover, allies in the shape of four boys, all of whom were evidently prepared to take their part in the fray.

"Tompkins," Rex said, "you might as well swim in and get those two oars that have drifted down. You cannot be wetter than you are, and if these fellows want any more the oars would come in wonderfully handy."

"Now then," shouted the bargee with a string of the strongest possible language, "how long are you going to keep

me standing here, and my mate a-lying there with his brains half knocked out?"

"He is all right," Rex said; "he will come round soon without your help, I dare say. He will have a lump on his head to-morrow, but he will be no worse. I don't think he will try to tighten the rope and upset another boat. As soon as we get the oars you can come ashore, if you like, and see to him."

In a minute or two Tompkins landed with the two oars. Rex gave one of them to Ah Lo, and took the other himself. The Chinaman swung it round his head like a windmill, and then nodded with a satisfied air.

"Now the sooner you three get the boat ashore and turn her over the better," Rex said. "There is no fear of this fellow interfering with us again. Now you can come ashore, bargee, and look after your horse. In another minute the rope will pull him into the river if you don't mind.

The man came out with a growl, and then went to the horse and, taking him by the head, led him up along the bank until the stream drifted the barge alongside. By this time his companion had sat up and was looking round in a bewildered way.

"You just sit where you are," Rex said, "unless you want another crack on the head worse than the first. Your mate is getting the barge alongside. It does not always pay, you see, to play tricks on boys."

They waited until the others had got the water emptied out of the boat and put into the river again. The oars were then handed in to them and they started down the river, Rex and Ah Lo walking quietly down the path. The bargee scowled at them as they passed him, but the specimen he had had of the Chinaman's strength deterred him from making any outward demonstration.

"You did that splendidly, Ah Lo," Rex said. "I had no idea that you were so tremendously strong. The way you chucked him into the river astounded me as much as it did him."

"He was a bad man," the Chinaman said quietly. "What he want to upset boat for?"

"He will be cautious how he tries again," Rex laughed, "unless he sees that the towing-path is quite clear of anyone who might interfere."

Hitherto Rex had been a good deal chaffed by the boys about this Chinaman, but from this time forward Ah Lo was always spoken of with respect; and indeed a subscription was got up to present him with a handsome silver-mounted stick in place of the one he had broken. There was general satisfaction at the defeat of the bargee, for it was not the first time that boats had been purposely upset, and there was a standing feud between the boys and these bullies of the river.

It cannot be said that Rex was in any way distinguished in his progress with his studies. He was on the modern side of the school, for his uncle did not wish him to waste his time in learning Latin and Greek, which could be of no possible use to him in a career in China. In his English subjects he made fair progress, and maintained a good, though by no means a high, position in his form. In all sports, however, he took a prominent place among the boys of his own age. Accustomed to take swimming exercise daily, he was, when fifteen, the fastest swimmer in the school. He won several prizes in the athletic sports, and had a good chance of getting into the second eleven at cricket. It was considered certain, too, that he would have a place in the second football team. Before he left, at sixteen, he had gained both these objects of his ambition, and it was generally considered that he might

even win a place in the first football team in the following season.

"You would be light for it," the captain said, "but you are so fast and active that you would be more useful than many of the fellows who are a good deal heavier than you are."

"I am sorry I am not going to return after this term, but my time is up. I have been nearly four years away from my people now, and I shall be glad to be at work."

"I suppose it is not a bad life out there?"

"Not at all. Of course it is hot, but one is indoors most of the day, and they do all they can to make the houses cool. The office shuts up early. After that one takes a bath and puts on flannels, and goes for a ride or a row on the river. Of course I could not do much that way then, but I have been so much on the water here that it will be much jollier now."

"I suppose you don't have much to do with the Chinese?"

"They work as porters and that sort of thing, but otherwise we do not see much of them. The native town is quite separate from the British portion, and it is not often that Europeans enter it. I expect that they do so even more seldom now, for my father's last letter tells me that there is a general feeling of disquiet, and that letters from missionaries up the country say the same thing. But our officials at Pekin do not seem to be at all uneasy. My father says that you might as well try to drive a wooden peg into a stone as to get the officials at Pekin to believe anything that they don't want to believe. That is one reason why I want to be off as soon as I can, for if things look more serious my father might write and say that I had better stay here for a time to see how matters turn out, and naturally if there is a row I should not like to miss it."

"It would be very hard," the other said approvingly, "if

there was a row and you were kept out of it. Of course it would be soon over, the Chinese would never stand against European troops."

"I don't suppose they would, Milton; but they are plucky enough in their way, and they are not a bit afraid of death. My uncle says that he hears they have got no end of rifles and guns—good ones, you know; not the old gimcrack ones they used to have."

"Look how the Japs thrashed them, Bateman."

"Yes, but it was from no want of pluck on the part of the Chinese. The Japs were well disciplined, while the Chinese had no discipline at all. Besides, what was worse, they had no officers worth anything. All appointments there are given by exams., and as everyone who is not an ass knows, a fellow who is awfully good at books may be no good whatever as a soldier. Look at our sixth form. Why, among the captains and monitors, how many of them would make an officer? Peebles is short-sighted, Johnstone is lame, and there is not one of them who is any good at football or cricket; while many fellows who are not so high would make infinitely better officers. Well, it is like that with everything in China. The great thing there is for a man to acquire what is called a classical style—something the same, you know, as Cicero writes in and Demosthenes talked. The Romans and Greeks were both pretty longheaded, but they never thought of appointing either of these men as generals in the field. Why, look at our head; he is choke-full of learning. Well, if he had lived in China he would have been made either an admiral or a general. Just fancy him with his spectacles. a skull-cap with a peacock's feather, and flowing robes, peering vaguely about him on the look-out for an enemy. How can you expect fellows to fight who are officered by men of that sort?"

"But our army is officered by men who have passed exams."

"Yes, but at any rate the exams. for the army are not very difficult, and there is time for them to play as well as work. Still, I know my uncle thinks that it is about the worst way that could have been chosen for the selection of officers, and that in the next war we get into there will be no end of blunders."

"It is likely enough that there will be; but there is one thing you must remember, and that is that, fortunately, the fellows who 'muz' at school are not the sort of fellows who go in for army examinations. They go into the church, or to the bar, or as masters in schools, or things of that sort. Look at us here. Lots of the fellows in the cricket and football teams are intended for the army, and I suppose it is the same in other schools, as it is from them that the officers are drawn. I don't say that there mayn't be a few of what you may call the grinders; still, certainly the bulk of them are not the sort of men who would ever set the Thames on fire if it came to only brain work."

"Have you ever thought of going into the army, Bateman?"

"No, because I have a line ready cut out for me. I think a fellow is a fool who wants to take up a fresh line for himself instead of taking that where he is certain, if he is steady and so on, to do well; and in the next place, when one is an only son, as I am, I think that, even putting aside the question of doing well, it is his duty to help as far as he can to take the burden of the work off his father's shoulders as he gets on in life."

"There is no doubt that you are right, Bateman. That is the way to look at it, though it isn't everyone who has the sense to do it. As I have got two elder brothers I am free to

choose my own line, and shall, if I can pass, go into the army; if not, I shall emigrate. I have got grit and muscle enough to do as well as most fellows in that way, and it seems to me that with good health and spirits it would not be a bad sort of life at all. If I manage to pass we may possibly meet out in China some day. There are rows in that part of the world every few years, and although from all descriptions of the country campaigning there must be unpleasant work, at least it would be a change and an interesting experience."

"Well, Milton, if you are out there we shall be very likely to meet, for any force going towards Pekin would be sure to pass through Tientsin, and if that were the case I should try to go with it as interpreter. However, I hope there won't be any rows, for though in the treaty towns we should no doubt be all right and the troops would be certain to lick the Chinese, the missionaries all over the country would be certain to have an awful time of it. We should be very anxious about that, because my mother's sister married a missionary and is settled a long way up the country."

"Is your Chinaman going back with you?"

"Yes; I should be awfully sorry to leave him behind. He has been with me as long as I can remember. My uncle only brought him over here in order that I might keep up my Chinese. I am sure that he would go through fire and water for me. It is a good thing to have a man like that, for, putting aside the fact that I like him tremendously, I would trust myself anywhere with him, for he is very strong, and, as he showed when he attacked those two fellows who upset the boat soon after I came here, there is no doubt that he is plucky. I expect he will be very glad to be home again. He has got accustomed to European clothes now, but I have no doubt that he would prefer his own; and then, of course, his family are there, and in China family ties are very strong.

Families always stick together, even to distant relations. My uncle says that the population should be counted by families and not by individuals. Of course I did not think of such matters before I came away, but he says that it is like the old Scotch clans: the State deals with the families and not with the different members of it. If a man commits a crime and gets away, the family are held responsible for it, and one of them has to suffer penalties and pays either a large money fine or is executed."

"That would be very rough on a family that happens to have one scamp among the sons."

"Yes, I suppose so; but it helps to keep them all straight. A fellow who committed a crime, for which his father or any of his near relations had to suffer, would be considered not only as a disgrace to the family but as a man altogether accursed and beyond the pall of pity whatever fate might befall him. My uncle says crime is very rare in China, and that this is very largely due to the family ties."

"But there are pirates on the coast and, as I hear, robbers on many of the rivers?"

"Yes; uncle says these men are fellows who have left their native villages and have banded together, so that if they are caught it is never known to what families they belong. They are beheaded, and there is an end of them, and their family never know anything about their case. The Chinese are a very peaceable lot, except that they sometims get tremendously stirred up, as in the case of the Taiping insurrection. The people hear stories that the foreigners are trying to upset their religion or to take some of the land. Hideous stories go about that they have killed and eaten children or sacrificed them in some terrible way. Then they seem to go mad; they throw down their hoes and take up swords and muskets, if they have them, and blindly fall upon the whites."

"They call us the foreign devils, don't they?"

"No, that is a mistake; the real meaning of the words is 'ocean devils,' which answers to our word 'pirates.' Europeans were called so because the Chinese coasts were ravaged, sacked, and burnt by adventurers who first sailed into the Chinese seas, and the name has been applied to the whites ever since. It is the same way with the name of their country. By a misunderstanding, when we first had diplomatic relations with them the word 'Celestial' was applied to their empire, and people ever since have believed that that is what they call the country. The word 'Celestial' is applied only to the emperor, who is viewed almost as a god, but they would never dream of applying it to the country. Because the document said 'the Celestial Emperor,' it was supposed that the kingdom over which he reigned was called the 'Celestial Kingdom.' On the contrary, they call it the 'Terrestrial Kingdom,' believing, as they did before they had anything to do with foreigners, that it was, in fact, the only kingdom existing on earth worthy of the name."

"And can you write Chinese as well as you can talk it, Bateman?"

"I can write the ordinary Chinese, but not the language of the literati class; that is entirely different, and the ordinary Chinaman has no more knowledge of it than I have. I believe that it contains twenty thousand different characters, and it is very doubtful if even the most learned Chinaman understands them all. Even the popular language is scarcely understood in all parts of China. The dialects differ as much as some of the English dialects, and the native of the Northern Provinces has the greatest difficulty in conversing with a man from the South."

"There is the bell ringing, and I must run round to the boarding-house to get my books."

Rex was extremely sorry when the last day of the term arrived and he had to say good-bye to his friends. Ah Lo, on the other hand, when he met him at the station, was in the highest spirits. He was delighted that he was henceforth always to be with his young master, and, though this was a minor consideration to him, he rejoiced at the thought that he was soon to return to his native land.

"This is a good country," he said, speaking in his own language, "much better than I had thought, and if all my family were not in China I should not mind living here all my life. They will be glad to see me too. Except that I have not been with them for so long, I have been a dutiful son, and have always sent half of my pay to my parents. They are well content with me. Fortunately I am the youngest of five sons. If I had been at home I should have had to stay at home to help my parents; but my brothers are all married and live in the village, so they can look after them and help them in their labours. As I left so young they do not miss me, and the money I have saved has helped to keep them in comfort. They have indeed received much more than they would have done had I stayed at home and worked for them, for my wages have been as much as my four brothers could earn together. I have only sent from here the same as I did when I was at Tientsin, although I have been paid higher, but then I shall have much to spend before we start, in buying presents for them and all my relatives. Besides, I have saved half of my earnings, for I have had no occasion to spend money here, and with my former savings added to this I shall be the richest man in the village. If I were to go back I could live comfortably all my life, but I should never want to do that, master, as long as you will keep me with you."

"That will be as long as we both live, Ah Lo; but I think that when you get back you ought to take a wife."

"I shall think about it," the Chinaman said, "but I shall think many times before I do it. When a man is married he is no longer master of his own house. The wife is always good and obedient until she has a son; after that she takes much upon herself. If one were to get the right woman it would be very good, but it is not in China as it is here, where you see a great deal of a woman before you marry. In China I should have to say to one of the old women who act as intermediaries, 'I desire a wife.' Then she goes about and brings me a list of several marriageable girls. She praises them all up, and says that they are beautiful and mild-tempered, and at last I choose one on her report; and it is not until after one is married that one can find out whether the report is true or not. Altogether the risk is great. I am happy and contented now; it would be folly for me to risk so much with so small an advantage. Suppose I had married before I came over here, my wife would have had to stay with my parents, and she might not have been happy there. I could not have brought her over here, for if I had done so everything would have been strange to her; the people would have pointed at her in the street, the boys would have called after her, and she would have been miserable."

"I am sorry that you are going back, Rex," his uncle said to him, when all the preparations for the voyage had been completed, and he was to embark on the following day. "I should have liked to keep you here, but naturally your mother and father want you back, and it is certainly best for you that you should, at any rate for some years, be over there to learn the business thoroughly, so that when your father retires you can succeed him, and in time perhaps come back to take charge here, if you can find among the clerks one suf-

ficiently capable to represent us out there. But I shall miss you, lad, sorely. I have always looked forward to your being home for the holidays, and I had great interest in your life and doings at school. Still, I knew, of course, that that could not last for ever. In a small way it will be a wrench losing Ah Lo; I shall find a difficulty in getting anyone to fill his place. A more attentive or obliging fellow I have never come across. It will be a satisfaction to me to know that he is with you, for should any troubles arise, which I regard as quite possible, you will find him invaluable.

"I only intended, when I took this house, to stay here until you returned, but I know so many people round here now that I shall probably stay on. I found it intolerably dull the first year, but now that I know all my neighbours it is different, and if I were to leave and take a house in town I should have all the work of making friends again.

"I hope that things will settle down in China. Your father's letters of late have taken rather a gloomy view of things, and he is not by any means given that way. I am more impressed by what he says than by what I read in the papers. In his last letter he says, 'I feel as if I were living in a country subject to earthquakes, and that at any moment the ground might open under our feet. It does not seem to me that our officials at Pekin have any idea as to the extent of the danger, but most of us here believe that it is very real. Happily we are strong enough to hold out here till aid could reach us, and this will be the case in all the treaty ports, but up-country the outlook would be terrible. Emma is greatly troubled as to her sister up-country, although to some extent she shares the belief of Masterton that the Chinese officials will protect them against the mob if troubles should begin. Although I don't tell Emma so, I do not share in that belief.

"'This Boxer movement, as it is called, might be easily

crushed now if the Chinese authorities chose, but there is good reason for believing that they have the secret support of the empress, and the men by whom she is surrounded. If so, the officials throughout the country will naturally go with the tide; and as life is thought so little of in China, few of them would bestir themselves in earnest to protect the missionaries, still less the native converts. Well, I hope that I may be wrong, but I cannot feel at all comfortable in my mind as to the future.'

"Knowing your father as I do, I cannot but think that the outlook is really serious. I was almost surprised that the letter did not conclude by saying, 'I think that you had better keep Rex for another year at school.'"

"I am very glad that it did not say so, uncle. For many reasons I am sorry to be going back, and I am very sorry to leave you. It has been very jolly at school, but if there is to be trouble I should like to be with my father and mother, and to do what little I can to aid in the defence of the English quarter if it should be attacked."

CHAPTER II

THE BOXERS

ALL was ready at last, and Mr. Bateman went down with Rex to join the steamer at Gravesend. As they went out on the tender Mr. Bateman said to a gentleman of about his own age, "Hillo, Chambers, who would have thought of seeing you here? Why, I haven't seen you since I came home."

"No, I came three months after you did. I wonder we never ran across each other before. Surely you are not going out again?"

"No, I have done with the glorious East for good," the other laughed. "I am only here to see my nephew off. You will hardly remember him; he was only about twelve when he came home with me."

"I certainly should not have known him again, Bateman. I am here on the same errand as you. My son is going out to Runciman's. I am still in the firm, and act as their agent here. I wonder we have never run against each other. My son is two or three years older than your nephew. Shake hands, you two young fellows. It will be pleasant for you both, starting with someone you know; it makes you feel comfortable at once. I know the purser of the *Dragon,* and will get him to shift one of you so that your cabins may be together. I know he will do that for me if the ship is not very full, which it is not likely to be at this time of year."

The two lads shook hands with each other. They had no time for any words, for at this moment the tender came alongside the steamer.

"You had better leave your traps here, boys," Mr. Chambers said, "while I run down and see the purser before he gets the whole crowd at his heels." In three minutes he returned. "I have managed that for you," he said. "Bring all your light traps down and take possession. He has ordered one of the stewards to put your names on No. 17. It is a three-berth cabin, but you will have it to yourselves. When you have put all your light traps in, you had better come and watch the baggage put on board. I suppose you have already sent on board your nephew's boxes for the hold, Bateman?"

"Yes; he has only two flat trunks for the voyage, made, of course, to go under the berths."

"That is just what my son has, plus a couple of gun cases."

"Rex has the same, a double barrel and a Lee-Metford."

"You don't think he will want that, do you?"

"I hope not; but my brother James writes so gloomily about the prospect that we thought it just as well to get him a weapon that might be useful in case of trouble."

"Well, I gave my lad two good double-barrels, not bad weapons in case of a sudden ruction with the natives. I should think that would be the worst danger. My people tell me that there is a great deal of talk, but they do not think anything will come of it."

"I hope not, I am sure. It would play the deuce with trade, but I agree with you in thinking that after the lessons we have given the Chinese, and the tremendous thrashings they have had from the Japs, they will not be foolish enough to want to do any more fighting. I do know, though, that they have been buying huge quantities of guns of all sorts,

and rifles. Still, I fancy that is only because they don't mean to be caught napping again."

While the elders were talking, the two lads made their way below. They found a steward, who took them to the cabin, on which their names had already been stuck, and they deposited their light traps there.

"This will be very jolly, Bateman," Chambers said, "especially as we are going to the same place. I have been at home for the past ten years, so it will be all new to me."

"I have only been at home for four," Rex said. "I dare say, however, I shall feel it strange when I go out again."

"Who is the Chinese fellow who came off with you?"

"He is one of the boys from my father's place. He was my special boy till I came home, so they sent him over with me, and he has been at my uncle's ever since."

"It seems rum keeping him over here all this time."

"Well, he was kept over here for my sake. I had leave out of school twice a week, and spent it with him in order to keep up my Chinese."

"You mean to say you can talk it?"

"Yes, as well as English."

"By Jove, that is splendid! I wish they had done the same with me. I suppose I talked it when I came over, though I don't know a word of it now, and shall have all the beastly grind of learning it."

"Well, anyhow, it will be easier for you than if you had never known it. They say if anyone has once known a language and then forgotten it, it is much easier for him to pick it up again. Well, we had better go upstairs now and look after our baggage."

In a few minutes they picked out their boxes and saw them taken down to their cabin. Then they rejoined their

friends until the bell rang. The partings were made with at least a show of cheerfulness.

"I am awfully obliged to you for all your kindness to me, uncle," Rex said. "I have had a jolly time, thanks to you, and shall always look back upon it."

"I have been glad to have you, Rex, and shall feel like a fish out of water without you. Give my love to them out there. I hope you will find things all quiet and comfortable."

They stood at the rail until the tender steamed away up the river, and then stood watching the passengers, many of whom were still hunting for missing boxes. Then they went down and tidied up their cabin, and afterwards walked on deck until the bell rang for dinner.

Dick Chambers had been educated at Marlborough, had played in the eleven, and had represented the school at rackets. He had also been lieutenant in the school corps, and had shot in their Bisley team. He was a pleasant young fellow, though he put on airs on the strength of his two years' seniority.

"Well, are you glad you are going home?" he said, when they went forward together to speak to the Chinaman.

"Glad some ways, not other ways," Ah Lo said. "Velly nice summer time, too much rainee winter time."

"But it is not very cheerful weather always in Tientsin, Ah Lo," Rex said.

"I want to get home to see palents. Sent home money to them, but dat not likee seeing them. Good piecee people here."

"You haven't got to talk English very well," Dick laughed, "considering you have been four years over here."

"Always talk China-talk with Massa Rex. Talk with Master Robert same in China. Never let me talk English to Massa Rex. Talk lillie English to girls in kitchen. Dey

always make fun of Ah Lo. Laugh at him face. Didn't talk much with them. Just talk pidgin English."

"No, I have never talked to him in English from the time when he first took charge of me until now. My father and uncle always talked to him in Chinese, so he really has had very little chance."

"Not want very much learn English," Ah Lo said; "if learn English, people in house say 'Ah Lo don't do this,' 'Ah Lo do that,' keep him always at work."

"You are like the monkeys who could talk well enough if they liked, but didn't do so lest they were made to work."

Ah Lo grinned, and then said in Chinese to Rex, "Ah Lo can work hard for his master, but not care to work hard for women who only make fun of him."

"I don't think the women meant to make fun of you, Ah Lo. My uncle told me that his housekeeper always spoke very well of you, and said that they all liked you."

"Always laughed at Chinaman's English."

"Well, of course it was curious to English servants. Pidgin English is very curious to people who are unaccustomed to it, with your funny way of sticking in 'piecee' at every other word, and 'number one first chop,' and things of that sort. At any rate there were never any quarrels between them and you. Are you pretty comfortable down below?"

"Not bad. Ah Lo expects that he will have to hit three or four of those men who pretend to turn up their noses at him. Ah Lo very peaceable, not want to fight, but not to be treated like poor common Chinaman. Ah Lo hit very hard."

"Yes, I know you do, Ah Lo," said Rex, "and I have no doubt that you will astonish them in that way if you begin. Still, it is better not to do it unless they provoke you a great deal."

He then walked aft again with Dick.

Three days later a serious complaint was brought before the captain, that three men had been grievously assaulted and battered by a Chinaman.

The captain was speaking to Rex when the complaint was made.

"That is my servant, no doubt," Rex said. "He is a very quiet and peaceable man, and no doubt some of the men forward must have been playing tricks on him."

The captain ordered the three complainants and the Chinaman to be brought aft. The faces of the former bore the signs of violent treatment, while the Chinaman was evidently none the worse of the conflict, and wore the usual placid air of his race.

"Now, let us hear your story," the captain said.

The three men each repeated the story, how without the smallest reason the Chinee had suddenly sprung upon them and beaten them.

"But how came you," said the captain, "three of you, to let this man assault you in the way you describe. Does your man speak English, Mr. Bateman?"

"He understands it perfectly, sir, but only speaks pidgin English. If, however, you will question him in English I will translate his replies to you."

"Well, sir, what do you mean by beating these men in this style?"

"These men make fun of me," Ah Lo said. "Ah Lo is a very quiet man, no want to have row. Men always keep on saying things against him. Ah Lo pretended not to understand, then they get worse. Presently one man push against Ah Lo one side, and then take off his hat and say, 'Beg pardon.' Then another push other side and say just the same. Then another man tumble against Ah Lo, then they all laugh very loud. Then Ah Lo say better look out, then

they laugh again and push Ah Lo still more. That not proper treatment, so Ah Lo take two of them by scruff of neck and knock their faces together. Then other man run in, and Ah Lo think it is about time to begin and hit him on nose, quite a little hit, but made blood run very hard. Then the other men try again, and Ah Lo slap them, and they tumble down. That is all. Ah Lo very gentle and quiet, but not proper for men to go too far with him."

The captain laughed when Rex translated this.

He said: "Well, my men, it seems to me that what you have got serves you right. You thought because this Chinaman was quiet and inoffensive that you could play any tricks you liked with him. You have made a bad mistake. It is evident that he is an uncommonly strong fellow, and he has given you what you deserved. I should say it would be wise for you to leave him alone in future, because if this is his way of being very quiet and gentle it might be serious if he lost his temper with you."

"Ah Lo is quiet and good-tempered," Rex said, as the others went forward. "One day when a couple of bargees upset a boat with some of our fellows in, Ah Lo took one of them and chucked him right out into the river. You never saw a fellow so astonished. But even then you would not have said that he was out of temper, for he looked as placid as possible, and only smiled when the fellow stood in the river and hurled bad language at him. He has been with me since I was a child, and I have never once seen him put out about anything."

From that time there were no more complaints of Ah Lo. The voyage passed, as most voyages do pass, without any particular incident. They had one gale in the China seas, but no serious damage was done except that a boat was washed away and the bulwarks stove in. Rex and Dick had

become great friends by the end of the voyage, and had promised to see a good deal of each other when they landed. They were not sorry, however, when the voyage came to an end, for Rex was looking forward to seeing his father and mother after their long separation, and Dick to reviving his very faint recollections of the country, and to making the acquaintance of the other young fellows of the establishment, and to entering upon serious work. They went ashore for a few hours at Hong Kong, and at Shanghai were transhipped to a comparatively small steamer, in which they made the journey to Taku. As soon as the vessel dropped anchor Mr. Bateman came on board. He had known the date at which she was due, and had come down by rail on the previous day.

"Well, you are grown a big fellow," he exclaimed, after the first greeting. "Of course, I knew that you would have grown, but I did not expect to see such a big fellow as you are. Ah, Ah Lo, so there you are! I have heard capital accounts of you from my brother, and Rex has never failed to give news of you in every letter he wrote."

As soon as the first questions had been asked and answered on both sides, Rex said, "This is Dick Chambers, father. We have been great chums on the voyage. He is coming out to Runciman's house."

"Oh yes, of course! I know your father very well. I am glad you came out together. It must have been more pleasant for both of you. One of the clerks of your house is somewhere about. He came down here to meet you, but I suppose he has not yet identified you."

An hour later all their belongings were got on shore, and a short time afterwards the train started. There was a great deal for father and son to talk about, and although the journey across the low flat country would have been considered very slow in England, it seemed to pass rapidly. It was

not until the next morning that Rex had time to talk of anything but England, and to ask about local matters.

"Things are very unsettled," said his father. "There are reports of massacres of missionaries at several places, but these reports must be received with a great deal of suspicion. For myself I am not very much inclined to believe them; and they always have to pay so heavily for indulging in freaks of this sort that I should hardly think they would be so foolish as to repeat them. You see, the last murder of two German missionaries gave Germany an excuse for seizing the port of Kiaochow. That action has been in all respects unfortunate. The province is considered a sort of Holy Land by the Chinese, and they have consequently resented the seizure of that port very bitterly. Besides, naturally it seems an altogether preposterous price to pay for the murder of two foreigners. I am wholly with them there. Suppose two Chinese had been killed in Germany, what do you think the Germans would say if China were to demand as compensation Bremerhaven? You only have to look at it in that light to see the monstrosity of the affair. Why, after defeating China and taking Pekin and expending some millions of money, all that the Allies demanded was that five ports should be open for commerce; and yet Germany takes as her own a port, with the surrounding country, for the death of two missionaries. Still, even that gross act of spoliation would, one might think, hardly excite the people to rise against missionaries in general. I cannot believe that at the worst these are anything more than isolated outbreaks, and I believe they will be very severely punished by the authorities. Still, it may safely be said that there is not an Englishman alive, not even Mr. Hart, who really understands the Chinese, or who can predict what they will do in any given circumstances. They are very like children: they will bear desperate oppression and

tyranny with passive submission, and they will then break out furiously at some fancied wrong.

"We never really get near the Chinese. They live in their native city; we live in our own settlement. We draw what labour we require from them, it comes and it goes again; but as far as the people are concerned, their ways, their talk, and their manner of life, we know no more of them than if the native town were situated in the moon. Their whole existence differs in almost every respect from ours. A Chinaman, if he is aggrieved by another, will go to the house of the man he has quarrelled with, and will cut his own throat at the door, and public opinion demands that the other man shall also cut his. If a man commits a crime and bolts, they don't trouble greatly to catch him. They simply inflict the punishment due to him on his nearest relative. I don't say that the system doesn't act well, for the ties of family are tremendously strong, and few Chinamen, indeed, would so utterly disgrace themselves as to allow their fathers to be executed in their place.

"As to religion, it can scarcely be said that they have any except worship of ancestors. They have superstitions, but no real religion. They look at everything, in fact, in a light that differs directly from that in which we regard it. Every Chinaman will cheat in a bargain if he can, and only laugh if he is found out, for he has no shame whatever in conduct which he considers natural if not meritorious. But they have not the slightest fear of death. I do not know that they have the same fatalism as the Mohammedans, but practically it comes to the same thing. I don't know whether you have heard in England about the Boxers?"

"Yes, I have heard something about them, but not much."

"The sect has existed some two hundred years. It doesn't

seem originally to have had any very positive aims. Its members performed certain rites and certain exercises in a secret sort of way, but I fancy that is pretty well all that is known of them. It is really only lately that they have become at all prominent, and have gone in for recruiting their numbers to any extent. The whole basis of the association has been changed. It was formerly an association apparently without any political aims, and to some extent resembling our own freemasonry; and it has become an active, militant, and in a certain sense a national movement, directed principally against foreigners, but also against the corruption of the Chinese Court and the terrible condition of the people in general.

"In one of their early proclamations they say the whole populace is sunk in wretchedness, and that all the officials are spoilers of their food. The condition of the Yamen is unspeakable. In every market and in every guild nothing can be done unless the officials are bribed. All sorts of exactions are made. They are all alike; ill-gotten wealth is their one object; right has disappeared from the world, and sins are unnumbered. In the Yamens it is of no avail to have a clear case; unless you bribe, you will lose the day. All this is unquestionably true. After reciting these things the proclamation then turns to foreigners. It says: 'Greater calamities have overtaken the nation. Foreigners, devils come with their teaching, and converts to Christianity, Roman Catholics and Protestants, have become numerous. These are without human relations, but being most cunning they have attracted all the greedy and covetous as converts, and to an unlimited degree they have practised oppression.'

"The great impulse was given in Shan Tung in the north, but the movement spread like wildfire. At first the authorities at Pekin were altogether hostile to it, but, seeing its

increasing power, there can be little doubt that the Empress has secretly encouraged it, with the object, no doubt, of diverting it from internal reform to hostility to foreigners. On the other hand, the more enlightened of the Chinese see the danger of the association. Several of the viceroys have taken measures against them, and General Nieh is preparing to attack them. The nine Yangtze viceroys are strongly opposed to the association. At present there has been no overt movement. It seems, as I said, true enough that some small missions in the interior have been attacked, but even this is unconfirmed. The cloud may blow over, or it may burst. I hope that in any case it will be confined to Northern China. If it extends over the whole country there can be little doubt that every missionary settlement in China will be wiped out, and the European settlements in all the mission towns will be attacked and their position become precarious in the extreme.

"As long as the movement is confined to the North it will be manageable. I do not say that the position of the European inhabits of Pekin will not become one of terrible peril, and we here may get our share of trouble; but Pekin is comparatively close to the sea, and although for a time the movement may have its own way, it will be only a repetition of the last troubles. A fleet of the Allied Powers could batter down the Taku forts and an army march to Pekin. They would have a battle or two to fight on the way, but they would defeat the Chinese with great slaughter, capture Pekin, and force the Empress to make terms. This will, to my mind, be almost assuredly the way things will go, unless the Empress takes firm ground, issues a proclamation denouncing the Boxers in the strongest terms, and orders all viceroys and generals to take prompt and energetic steps against them. I may tell you, however, that a considerable

number of the British colony here do not share my views, and believe that the thing will die out.

"At any rate, for the present there is nothing to do but go on with our regular work, and see what comes of it. Your work will not be very heavy, for trade is nearly at a standstill, and no one is getting fresh goods up from Shanghai. So you will have an easy breaking-in to work, which will give you an opportunity of looking up the few young fellows you knew before you left. There are, I think, only five or six who have not been home, but there are others who, being a few years older than you, went home before you and have since returned. There are, of course, some pleasant families here, and these I will give you an opportunity of knowing by having some of them to dinner every night this week. In that way you will speedily get to feel at home in the place. I shall, of course, take you up to the club. You used to do a good deal of drilling with Ah Lo before you went away, and as you would no doubt like to keep up your rowing, you will have plenty of opportunities of doing so on the river."

For the next three weeks Rex had a very pleasant time. He spent the morning always in his father's office, where he was instructed in the method of book-keeping employed, and in the general work of the house. Of an afternoon he either went with Ah Lo for a ramble in the native city or for a sail on the river, and sometimes played at cricket. Of an evening he either dined at home or at other houses, and at the end of the three weeks had made the acquaintance of almost all the British families in the settlement. Dick Chambers was generally at liberty in the afternoon and shared in the amusements.

"Stick to your amusements, Rex," said his father. "The great thing in this country is to take to outdoor exercise as

much as possible, and to make life go pleasantly when your work is done. I consider that for the next two or three years it will be quite sufficient for you to work here from nine till one, except on mail days, when you will find it necessary to stick at it all day. The more amusement you get out of your life the better I shall be pleased."

So Rex joined in all that was going on. He and Dick were at once enrolled in the volunteer corps that had recently been formed, and of which all the clerks and younger members of the firms there had become members as soon as there were signs of possible trouble. As the news from without became daily more serious, cricket was given up and the evenings were devoted to drilling and shooting. The latter was specially attended to. It was evident that so small a body of men could have small occasion for manœuvres of any kind, but that individual shooting might be of extreme importance. Dick Chambers had been elected captain of the corps, as he had learned his work at Marlborough and was the best marksman of his year.

"It isn't much of a place for defence," he said to Rex, "but of course we shall have troops up from the ships; and at any rate five-and-twenty of us, if we shoot straight, can do a good deal; and of course all the heads will join if necessary, though they may not think it worth while to do so now. There is no doubt that the news gets worse every day, and that there are large numbers of these Boxers all over the country. I think the Chinese general is really, as he says, hostile to them, but of course what he does when the time comes will depend upon what orders he gets from the Empress, who is in every sense an unknown quantity in the problem. If he fights the Boxers, we sha'n't have to; if he joins them, we shall all have our work cut out for us. In case of a row we may take it as certain that the population of

the native town will all join in, partly because, like the rest of them, they hate us, partly to get a share in the loot. I hear that some of the traders are getting alarmed, and are sending their goods down to the port to be shipped back to Shanghai by the first steamer that comes along. I don't think that our people are going to do so."

"I am sure my father will not," Rex said. "He thinks there is no doubt that we shall be able to defend ourselves with the aid of the force they will send up, and I believe he expects that they will send some troops up from Shanghai very shortly. Things may hang on as they are for some time. He rather calculates that a good many of the coolies who have been in the employ of the various houses for the past ten or twelve years will stand by us. I don't think that any strong national feeling exists among them, and I believe they will stick to those who have paid and treated them well. I don't mean that he thinks that they will fight, but they will throw up barricades and strengthen the godowns. In that way they would be of immense use."

"It all depends, from what I hear," Dick said, "upon whether they have families in the town. Those that have will be obliged to leave us whatever their own feelings may be, otherwise their families would be massacred at once. Of course if a man has come from a distance with a wife and a child or two he will probably bring them in here, but those born and bred here who have lots of relations would have no option in the matter, poor beggars!"

More alarming reports from up country continued to arrive, and the greatest anxiety began to prevail as to the fate of the missionaries. One morning when Rex went in to breakfast he found his mother in tears and his father looking very grave.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"There is a report in the town that there has been a riot at Chafui. The mission-house has been attacked, and certainly some of the missionaries have been killed. Others, it is said, were taken to the governor's Yamen. What has been their fate no one knows. It is certain that what troops there were in the town did not in any way interfere with the Boxers, and whether the governor had the power or the will to resist them is not known. Robson had no right to keep his wife and girls there. I wrote him again and again begging him to send them down here, but he is one of the most obstinate men I ever knew. If he liked to risk martyrdom, of course he was at liberty to do so, but he had no right to expose them to such a fate. However, it is useless to talk of that now. It is maddening to think that Kate and the two girls should be in the power of these fiendish scoundrels."

"Can nothing be done, father?"

"What can be done?" Mr. Bateman said bitterly. "It will be as much as we are able to do to hold our own here. The whole country round is in their hands, and it is very doubtful whether Admiral Seymour can, with every man that possibly can be spared, fight his way to Pekin, which is two hundred miles away. Certainly no force can be spared to rescue people who fall into the hands of the Boxers so far away."

Rex stood in silent consternation. He had not seen his uncle or any of the family since his return, but his aunt and the two girls had been staying some weeks at the house before he went away. "It is awful!" he said at last; "and Uncle must have been mad not to have sent them down when the troubles began."

"I think so, too, Rex. As for his staying himself it is different. He has a large number of converts there, and no

doubt he hoped that his presence there would be some protection. You see, one of the principal causes of the Chinese dislike for us is the missionary question. It is a religious question as much as a political one. The Chinese are in some things very superstitious. They worship to some extent the spirits of their ancestors, but for other religion they care but little. There is no ill-feeling between men of different religion here. No resistance was offered to the spread of Buddhism; the Taoists do not quarrel with those who are practically Confucians. But with Christianity it is different. The converts come under the protection of the missionaries, who have behind them the European powers, and consequently they are, to a great extent, independent of the local officials. The feeling has been greatly aggravated by France insisting that her bishops should have the rank of mandarins, and be judges over their native converts. All this has been a great mistake, for which we are paying now. I believe that our own missions have striven hard to avoid giving offence, and all missionaries in the up-country stations dress in native costume, for the Chinese regard dress as a serious matter."

While this conversation had been going on, Mrs. Bateman had left the room.

"You had better sit down and eat your breakfast, Rex. You can give me a cup of tea; I could not eat anything now. Kate is very dear to me, and so are the girls. They were here twice while you were away, and stayed with us each time for some weeks."

"I don't remember much about the girls, father. The elder was three years younger than I, and was quite a child, and Mabel was two years younger still."

"They were growing up very nice girls," Mr. Bateman said sadly. "Jenny is now nearly fifteen and Mabel thirteen. Of

course they had not the freshness of girls brought up at home, and I spoke to their mother when she was up here, and wrote to your uncle, urging that they should go home for a couple of years, and offering to pay all their expenses. He said that in another year he would take the matter into consideration."

Rex ate a few mouthfuls, and then went out into the courtyard. Ah Lo was sitting there. By his serious face Rex saw that he had heard the news.

"This is a terrible business," Rex began.

"A very bad business, master."

"Is there anything to be done, do you think?"

The Chinaman knit his eyebrows. "What could be done?" he asked.

"That I don't know; but it is horrible to sit here and do nothing when my aunt and cousins are, if they are alive, prisoners, and may be put to horrible tortures before they are killed."

Ah Lo was silent.

"Do you think you and I could get there and try to rescue them?"

The Chinaman's eyes opened wide. "Do you really mean that, young master?"

"Yes; I do not see why we should not get there all right, though I don't say that we could rescue them. We could both dress up as villagers, or as Boxers if you like, and as I speak Chinese as well as you do, I don't see why we should not both make our way through. I could stain my skin just a little so as to get it just the right colour, and shave my head and put on a pigtail. Many Chinese wear spectacles, great things with thick rims."

"Villagers do not often wear them, master, though the literati who wear their eyes out in staring at a book often

do. You could not go as one of them, for you do not speak the same language."

"Well, I should think that you might paint a little line in each corner of my eyes so as to make them look a little up and down like the Chinese eyes."

"Ah Lo had better go alone," the Chinaman said quietly.

"Not at all," Rex said. "My aunt and cousins are a great deal to me, they are nothing to you, and I certainly won't let you go alone."

"The master would never let you go," Ah Lo said positively.

"I don't suppose he would; but he would not know anything about it until I had gone. I should leave a letter behind telling him why I had gone, and that I was so disguised that I could pass for a Chinaman anywhere. I should say also that I know my chance of succeeding is not great, but that I consider the risk of being found out is still less. I should, of course, promise to take every precaution."

"The master would never forgive me," Ah Lo said.

"Oh, yes! he would. I should say further that I had made up my mind to go, and that I told you that if you did not go with me I should go alone, which I mean to do. I am some months past sixteen now, and I think I can take care of myself, though I should feel a great deal more comfortable having you with me."

CHAPTER III

IN DISGUISE

"WELL, what do you think of it, Ah Lo?"

"If you have quite made up your mind, young master, I will go with you," Ah Lo said quietly; "if I return with you the master will not say much, and certainly if you do not return I shall not."

"Thank you, Ah Lo! Now, let us settle at once how we shall go, for every hour is of importance. Which do you think would be best, to go as villagers or as Boxers?"

"I think as villagers, master. We can go from village to village with the tale that we have been coolies working here, and that now there is no trade and no employment we are going to visit our family, who live near Chafui. We can carry with us clothes such as the Boxers wear, either red or yellow, so that when we get to Chafui we can put them on if we like. Of course we shall take swords and long knives."

"I have the two revolvers my uncle gave me when I came away," Rex said; "we can each carry one of them. As we shall say that we come from Tientsin, the fact that we have revolvers would excite no suspicion. If we are questioned we could easily say that we took them secretly from our employer's house when we came away from here. I have got a good stock of cartridges. Of course many of the Boxers are armed with good rifles, but would a villager be carrying them?"

"No, but a coolie from here might do so. Numbers of the

Boxers have been killed near Tientsin, and there would be nothing improbable in the statement that as we left the town we had picked up two rifles. A good many rifles are still lying in the suburbs where the fighting went on; if you go out there this morning you might find a couple, for the streets are quite deserted, and then you might put them in a doorway where we could find them as we went along. You would also have to find some packets of cartridges. When shall we start, master?"

"If we can be ready to start to-night all the better."

"There can be no difficulty about that. I know many native shops where I can get the clothes, and there are plenty of dead Boxers from whom I could take red suits. You could not get your head shaved here, but I will carry a razor and soap with me, and in the morning, first thing, will shave your head. I can buy a pigtail in the town, as many people who have not much hair use false pigtails, and I have no doubt that plenty of them are to be found in the empty shops in the native town."

"Shall we require to take any food with us?"

"We can take enough rice for our journey, master, and we can get tea anywhere; but you will have to do without anything else."

"That makes no difference at all; I can do very well on rice, and I can take some of the condiments we use with it. Even if we are searched, these will be as natural as the rice."

"Is there anything else that you can think of, master?"

"No, I cannot think of anything else at present, but I shall see you again later, and can then fix on the hour for starting."

During the time when the danger was at its greatest the house had never been so silent, or the face of Mr. Bateman so grave. His wife was absolutely prostrated. This added to

the resolution the lad had taken. At whatever risk he might incur, his aunt and cousins must be rescued if they were alive when he reached Chafui, and it were within the limits of possibility to do so. He did not think that the journey in itself really involved any risk, and should he find that all had been massacred he had but to return. He knew how precious his life was in the eyes of his parents, and he resolved to take every means possible to avoid risk. Even if the news he brought back were of the worst, it would be better for his mother than the terrible anxiety that she was now suffering as to the fate of his aunt and cousins.

In the course of the day he wrote a letter to his father, which ran as follows:—

"My Dear Father,

"When you receive this I shall be miles away. As you know, as far as talking goes, I can pass anywhere as a native; and as I shall be thoroughly disguised, I feel sure that with Ah Lo I could go right through China without being suspected. Seeing how terribly anxious my mother and you are about the safety of Aunt and the girls, I have made up my mind to go to Chafui to gather news of them. I am sure that it would be better for Mother to know even the worst than to suffer this terrible anxiety. I do not think I shall run any risk whatever.

"I must tell you that though Ah Lo is going with me it is very much against his will, because he thought that you would blame him if things went wrong, and it was only when I told him that if he did not go with me I should go alone that he consented to accompany me. It was not that he thought of the danger, but that he feared you would be displeased with him for undertaking this journey without your permission. I don't think that I should have carried

out the threat. Although I know the language well enough I do not know anything of the customs and the religion, and I felt that it would really be a hazardous enterprise if Ah Lo did not go with me. Now, however, that at last he has consented to accompany me, I have no fear whatever.

"I should have asked your permission to undertake this expedition, but I was afraid that you would refuse, and I felt so sure of being able to accomplish my purpose without difficulty that I decided to go without telling you of my intention. You see, Father, it is evident that after what is going on every white man in China will be in peril for a long time to come, and as it is settled that I am going to stay here for at any rate a good many years, I shall have to run risks, and those risks will be greater than any I am likely to meet with now that I am going in disguise. I am quite prepared for emergencies, so I hope that you will not be angry, though I know you will be anxious until I return.

"Ah Lo's native village is only a few miles from Chafui, and his story that, as there was no longer work to be done in Tientsin, he was going for a time to see his friends is plausible. Indeed, we shall probably stay there among his friends and learn all that has taken place in the town, so that everything will be easy sailing. You must not expect me back for about a month. It will take us ten days to walk to Chafui, ten days to stay at Ah Lo's village and get full information, and ten to return. That is as near as I can tell at present. There may be unexpected delays, but anyhow we shall not be back in less than a month. Should I find that I am likely to be much longer away, I shall, if possible, send one of Ah Lo's people down with a message to you.

"Of course, Father, you can, if you think best, tell Mother where I have gone, and why, or lead her to believe that I have gone down to the coast to make arrangements with ships

that have arrived with goods for you, or to act as an interpreter to the troops as they come up.

"I believe that if I had never gone to England I should not have thought of carrying out such a plan as this, but one gets to think for one's self when one is at school. I feel sure that there was scarcely a fellow of my age there who, if he had the advantages in the way of speaking languages that I have, would not willingly have undertaken the job. Certainly I feel that the amount of risk to be run is very small compared with the importance of relieving Mother's mind and yours, and, of course, though it is some years since I have seen my aunt and cousins, I, too, am very anxious."

That evening he felt even more than before that the proposed expedition was excusable, for his father said: "I am terribly anxious, Rex. Your mother has been delirious all the afternoon, and the doctors are both feeling very anxious about her mind. You see, we have all gone through the strain of the last two months, and this blow coming on the top of it has had a very much greater effect than it would have had in ordinary circumstances. They think that if she had known for certain that her sister and the girls had been killed, the shock would have had less disastrous effects than this terrible uncertainty. It may be weeks, it may even be months, before the truth can be known and her mind relieved of the strain. They fear that when the present paroxysms have passed away she may settle down into a state of fixed melancholia, and if bad news came then it might simply deepen this melancholia, which would in that case become permanent."

"It is indeed terrible, Father, but I hope that the doctors' view is a mistaken one."

Mr. Bateman shook his head and passed his handkerchief

across his eyes, and if up to that time Rex had had any doubt that he was going to act wisely, he felt now that, even apart from his own anxiety about his aunt and cousins, he was fully justified by his mother's state in carrying out his plan.

At eleven o'clock that night he crept out of the house. He had dyed his skin with a mixture which Ah Lo had brought him, dressed himself in the native clothes, and put the sword, knife, and pistol in his belt. In a bundle he had three boxes of ammunition and the Boxer clothes, together with a pair of light boots to put on when there were no villages near, in case the Chinese shoes should gall his feet. Ah Lo was at the gate of the courtyard. He wore no disguise, but had put on coarse coolie clothes instead of those he wore as a trusted servant in the house.

"Have you got everything, Ah Lo?"

"Everything; ten pounds of rice, the box of clothes, the ammunition for the pistols, another bottle of the dye for your skin, some black dye for your eyebrows and eyelashes, and a little brown for the corners of your eyes. I have changed the piece of gold you gave me for dollars in cash, and I have got a pigtail and the razor and soap."

"I have bought a small compass," Rex said. "It may be useful to us going across the country, for I know that the roads are mostly tracks between the villages and cross each other in all directions."

On leaving the premises they picked up Rex's rifle and bag of ammunition, and the rifle that Ah Lo had bought during the day and had hidden away outside the settlement. Then they made a detour to avoid the native town, and, when once fairly beyond this, struck out across the fields. They made a long detour to avoid the encampment of Chinese soldiers, and then struck into a steady walk.

When a few miles from the town they saw fires burning, and made another detour to avoid these, knowing that they marked the position of parties of Boxers. They walked steadily all night, and in the morning reached a village, having made, as they calculated, at least thirty miles. Few people were about. Burnt cottages showed that the Boxers had passed that way and, as usual, had looted and destroyed everything they could lay hands on. Indeed, not being a regularly-organized body, they were forced to depend upon what they could take for subsistence, and were the scourge of the districts through which they passed.

"So you are going to Chafui!" said an old man whom they had asked if there were any Boxers in the neighbourhood. "You will have to be very careful. Those who have been attacking Tientsin are still in that neighbourhood, but you may come across other parties marching down to join them. They are terrible people. If anyone refuses to give them all that they ask for, they will kill everyone in the house and burn it afterwards. They make most of the young men go with them to fight the whites in Tientsin. It is a terrible time. I can remember the Taiping rebellion, and this seems to me to be quite as bad. They all say that the Empress is in their favour, but I cannot believe it. They tell terrible tales about the missionaries; but I lived for some time at Chafui, and it seemed to me that they were good and peaceful people, and although I stay so near Tientsin I have not till of late heard a word against the merchants there. They have indeed done much good for the town; they pay those who work for them well and do no harm to anyone. A son of mine worked for them for ten years, and came back with enough money to live comfortably all his life. He was a good son, and helped me as a son should do, but the Boxers killed him a month ago because he ventured to say that so

far from doing harm the foreigners enriched the town and brought much trade into it."

"I shall take care to keep my mouth shut when I get home," Ah Lo said. "I too have worked for them and found them good masters and just people, but after what you have told me I shall take care not to say a word in their favour."

"You will be wise not to do so. And now you say you wish to sleep, as you have walked all night. You can lie down in the room upstairs; no one will disturb you. We used to be glad to question strangers who came along, for further news, but now our own troubles are quite as much as we can think of. I fear that this will continue until the last of the sea-pirates is killed; after that who can say what will happen!"

After cooking the rice they had bought, and eating a meal, they went upstairs and slept for many hours. As soon as night fell they continued their journey, and on the seventh morning after starting they arrived within a few miles of Chafui. They had met with no adventures on the way. Several times they went into the fields and hid among growing grain to avoid a party of the enemy, and once, just as they had arrived in a village, a band of Boxers came in, but they managed to slip out of the house unobserved and spent the night in the fields.

They had agreed that they would not enter Chafui until they had first paid a visit to Ah Lo's native village, where they would be able to learn the state of things in the town. They could then decide whether it would be best to put on their Boxer dresses or not. They had scarcely entered the village when Ah Lo was recognized. As one of his old friends shouted his name and a welcome, people ran out from all the houses to greet them, and by the time he reached his father's door he was surrounded by a crowd of friends and neigh-

bours, and Rex understood for the first time how very close was the family bond in China.

It was five years since Ah Lo had been there, and he was greeted as a wanderer returning to his parents, and bringing, no doubt, some of the proceeds of his labours. Indeed, the villagers had already benefited, for while he was in England he regularly forwarded a portion of his wages to his parents. Thus he bore a good name. He had never brought any trouble upon the village; he had never been called upon to pay a fine for his misdeeds; and his father and mother were considered fortunate people in having such a son. They too had come to the door, attracted by the loud talking outside, and their delight at his return was touching.

When at last they had entered the house and closed the door the old man said: "We have been uneasy about you. The message telling us of your return, and your welcome present, gave us at first great joy; but when, two days later, the disturbances began we trembled for your safety, and have offered up many prayers to Buddha to preserve you for us. But I see that things have gone wrong with you. Last time you came you were well clad, and all said truly, 'Ah Lo is making his fortune'; but now your clothes are those of a common man."

"I have so clad myself, Father, in order to escape plunder on my way with my friend here. He too belongs to the white merchant for whom I have worked so long. Like myself he wanted to escape from the city where there was such fierce fighting, and as trade was at a stand-still we had no difficulty in getting away."

"He is welcome for your sake," the old man said. "If he is your friend, assuredly he is our friend also, and he shall share with us all we have, which, indeed, we owe chiefly to you. And have you come to stay with us for good, Ah Lo?"

"No, Father, I have come to gather news, and that partly on business; so my pay is still going on. As you know, the missionary at Chafui is the brother of my patron—at least his wife is sister of my patron's wife. News has reached him that there were bad doings at Chafui, and consequently he and his wife are greatly disturbed; so I said that I would come here and learn the truth of the reports that we had heard."

"It is true," his father said. "The Boxers came to Chafui and stirred up the people of the town, and they ran together and attacked the praying-house and the people who have taken to the strange religion. The missionary fought hard when they attacked his house, but what could he and a handful of his followers do against many hundreds? The soldiers did not move to help him, and the house was taken and he was killed. The women of the family were carried to the governor's yamen. It was reported that his wife has died from grief and terror, but I cannot say whether that is true; of her daughters I have not heard."

This confirmation of his worst fears was a terrible blow to Rex, who with difficulty restrained himself from bursting into tears.

"That is bad news indeed," Ah Lo said gravely. "It will be a heavy blow to my patron and his wife, and I myself am sorely grieved, as is also Shen Yo, my companion; for we have both seen the lady and her children when they have been staying at our patron's house. They were good people and kindly, and assuredly never did anyone any harm."

"They were well spoken of," Ah Lo's father said: "no one had any harm to say of them. It was not until the Boxers stirred up the rabble of the town against these Christians that there was any disturbance here. It was always said that the governor was unfavourable to the Christians, but as they gave no cause of complaint things have always gone on quietly

enough, as the orders from Pekin always have been that they should not be molested. But for some weeks past we have heard reports that the Empress had turned her face against them, and that her counsellors were of opinion that these foreign people should be destroyed or driven from the country. We even heard that men were being drilled in Pekin; but people in general did not think much of these things until the Boxers grew numerous and began to create disturbances. Many of us were grieved, for the white people had shown much kindness and had given good medicines to people who were ill, and in other ways had done much good. But, of course, when the Empress and her counsellors had given the word to kill, no one would venture to withstand the Boxers and the rabble of the town. The governor knew the will of those in high places, and when word was sent to him of what was being done, he remained in his yamen and kept the soldiers quiet, so that no one dared to lift a finger to aid the whites. Many tales were told of their ill doings; how they stole little children and sacrificed them to their gods; but for myself I did not believe these things. We have always heard from you that the whites were good people, that they treated all natives well, and assuredly if you had heard of such doings as this you would not have remained with them. Therefore we did not believe these tales to their disadvantage, but we should only have thrown away our lives if we had ventured to express our feelings. Even in the village most people believed the tales, and said it was good that the foreign devils should be destroyed, so now that you have come back you must not speak in favour of these people or you will assuredly lose your life."

"I shall hold my tongue, Father. Who am I that I should disobey the orders of the Empress? Nevertheless, I tell you that these white people are good. Have I not lived among

them for nearly four years? They are good people. Among them no one is ill-treated, or beaten, or put to death. None carry weapons; everyone respects the others. Although I was a stranger and a foreigner, no one molested me; I went and came as I chose. As to their offering sacrifices and killing children, the thing is absurd. They are anxious to do good to foreigners, and subscribe great sums to send their priests abroad that they may teach other people their religion. All these stories that are told about them are lies, and they have been told for the purpose of rousing ill-feeling against them. I am grieved that this trouble has come about, but assuredly it is no business of mine, except in so far as it concerns the friends of my patron. The ladies have stayed at his house, and they have spoken kindly to me and have given me money. I would do much for them for their own sake, as well as for that of my patron, who, as I have always told you, is the best man I have ever met. But I see that I can do nothing, and I can only grieve over the misfortunes that have befallen him. Of course I shall say nothing here as to my feelings, and shall even join in the cry against the foreigners. I have no wish to throw away my life and to bring disgrace and death upon you and my mother."

"That is right, Ah Lo. It would assuredly bring terrible misfortune upon you were you to say a word in favour of the Christians. There are many who share your feelings, but they dare not open their lips, and you too must hide your real sentiments. The order has come that the Christians must be destroyed, and that order must be obeyed. Most of the young men of the village have joined the Boxers, fearing that unless they did so evil would befall them. Now tell me something about the country where you have been living, and about these strange people, who are not content to live in their own island, but come here to turn the minds of the

people against their god and to bring trouble on the land. Are there many of them?"

"Very many; not so many as there are in China, but they are brave soldiers, and have arms altogether superior to ours. That, together with the way in which they are trained, gives them a great advantage over us. But though they can fight well, they do not wish to fight. They are great traders, and it is only when their trade is interfered with, or their people ill-treated, that they go to war. They have no enmity against people of other religions, and all the time that I was in England no one ever tried to turn me from my faith. No one said a word against Buddha, or interfered with me in any way. They think that their religion is right, just as we believe in ours, and they try to convert others, just as the Buddhists came to China and converted large numbers of our people. They think that they are doing good, and spend much money in trying to do so. It is strange to me that they cannot leave things alone, but it is their way, and certainly I have no ill-will towards them on that account. When my mother has got our meal ready, and we have eaten, I will tell you much about them and of the life that I led there; but the tale is so long that I dare not begin it fasting."

For two or three hours Ah Lo talked with his parents, and then went out into the village with Rex and chatted with the villagers. He learned a good deal as to the state of the town, and arranged to buy some vegetables, saying that he wanted to go in and see for himself what had taken place, and that he did not like going in empty-handed, as he might be ill-treated by the Boxers were he walking about idly.

The great topic of conversation, however, was with regard to the fighting at Tientsin. Few particulars of this had been heard, and the villagers were astonished when they heard that the white devils had resisted all attacks upon them and had

repulsed the Boxers with great slaughter, although the latter were no doubt much more numerous and had succeeded in destroying the greater portion of the town. Ah Lo, however, told his friends that the Boxers were still excited, and would no doubt renew their attacks with greater success, although some of the sailors from the ships were coming up to aid the whites.

"I was glad to get away," he continued, "for there was always shooting going on, and I feared that if the Boxers came in they would kill those who were in the employment of the whites. Most of these men managed to escape before I did, but I took the opportunity of the lull in fighting to escape at night."

It was not until the old people had retired for the night that Ah Lo and Rex sat down to talk with each other. It had been a long and painful day for the lad; he had been compelled to appear at his ease, to answer innumerable questions, and to support Ah Lo in his various statements. But when at last he found himself alone with his faithful servant he exclaimed; "Thank God, Ah Lo, we can now talk and decide what is to be done! I feel almost mad at the news. It is bad enough to know that my aunt has died, but to think of my cousin in the hands of these fiends is enough to drive me out of my mind. Of course we must try to rescue them. How it is to be accomplished I have not the faintest idea at present, but I am quite resolved that if it is in any way possible it must be done."

"I am ready to do what I can, master, but if they are in the governor's yamen I do not see how we can manage to release them."

"No, nor do I; but there must be some way. There is always some way, Ah Lo, if one can but hit on it. I suppose the governor's yamen will be guarded by soldiers?"

"It is certain to be," Ah Lo said. "It would be in ordinary times, but now the watch is probably more strict than ever, because, although the governor has sided with the Boxers, it is probable that he is still afraid that they may attack him."

"Well, to-morrow we must have a good look at the place. It is certain that there is no time to be lost, for these two poor girls may at any moment be murdered. We may take it as certain that there is no possibility of releasing them by force. The people here are evidently so completely cowed by the Boxers that it would be hopeless to get any of them to aid us in that way. We can do nothing until we see the place. I suppose you know it?"

"Yes, there is a large courtyard in front of it, with a guard-house at the gate, and a wall runs across the courtyard just about the middle of the house. In the front part are the public offices, in the back the governor's private apartments. Behind the building there is a large garden."

"And it is probable that the prisoners are kept at the back of the house?"

"It may be so, master, but one cannot say. It is possible that the public may be permitted to stare at them, and in that case they might be in the front part of the house."

"That doesn't matter much. When we are in the town to-morrow we will go into the courtyard if the gates are open and the public are admitted; if not, we must try some other means to find them. Now, from what you say, I should think that it is by the garden that we must effect an entrance. Though there may be sentries in front of the house, it is hardly likely that any will be placed in the garden. But if sentries are there we ought to have no difficulty in settling them. Once into the garden, we ought easily to effect an entrance by a door or a window. Then, of course, we should

have to be guided by circumstances, for there will doubtless be a number of servants sleeping in the passages, and possibly some soldiers. You are going to help me, aren't you, Ah Lo?"

"Certainly, master; I have come here to do so. My life is of little consequence to me. If it is my fate to die now I must die. Tell me what you want done and I will do it."

"Thank you, Ah Lo! I knew that I could rely upon you. If I could manage it by myself I would do so, but certainly I shall require assistance. We have to consider not only how to get the girls out, but also how we are to escape pursuit. Of course we shall need disguises, for there is sure to be a hot search, and the whole country will be scoured."

"Well, master, we may as well sleep now. We can talk matters over when we go to the town in the morning. A couple of great baskets of vegetables will be ready for us in the morning, and we shall have plenty of time to talk over our plans as we go along."

CHAPTER IV

A RESCUE

AN hour after dawn they started. Early as it was the vegetables had been cut and packed in three large baskets, and after paying for them they put the straps of the baskets across their foreheads and started. The loads were fairly heavy and although Ah Lo carried his without difficulty, Rex found the strap press very heavily on his forehead.

"I was thinking it over in the night, master," Ah Lo said, when they had gone a short distance.

"Don't call me master, Ah Lo; you know that we agreed that you should always call me Shen Yo."

"I will try to do so. Well, I have been thinking it over, and I consider that if we succeed in getting the ladies away, we should at first go north. The search will be made for us chiefly on the roads to Tientsin and Pekin. The distance is about the same to both towns. They will scarcely suspect that we have gone north, and if we travel all night, hide in a rice-field during the day, and then again travel all night, we should be beyond the reach of searchers, and could then travel round to Pekin, which would, I think, be safer than Tientsin, where the Boxers will always be in numbers. Of course we must have disguises for the ladies. Their best plan would be to dress as boys. Chinese women do not travel about, and their doing so would at once give rise to suspicion. We must, of course, get some stain to give them the

proper native colour. When we have turned our faces towards Pekin we must state that you and I are going to enlist in the Chinese army, that we have friends in Pekin, and that the boys are going with us to get any work they can. We can account for our guns by saying that we have obtained them from some of the Boxers who had brought them from Tientsin."

"Yes, we must stick to them if we can," Rex agreed. "As they are magazine rifles we ought to be a match for any twenty of these villagers or a dozen Boxers; and at any rate, if the worst came to the worst, we could be killed fighting and not be put to death by slow torture.

"I have been thinking too," Rex added, "that the best thing to do will be to set the house on fire. If we take in with us a large can of spirit, sprinkle it over everything in one of the rooms, and then spill a lot in the passage and set it all alight, the sudden alarm will create such a tremendous confusion and panic that we may be able to seize the girls and carry them off without being noticed."

"That would be a very good plan," Ah Lo agreed. "We shall have to carry a heavy sledge-hammer with us to break in the door of their prison, for they are sure to be locked up. A sentry will probably be stationed at their door, and of course we must stab him. If we set fire to the house, as you propose, we had better carry thick clothes with us to throw round them, as, in order to carry them off, we may have to run through the flames. The wrappings will protect them, and besides people won't notice what we are carrying and will think that we are rescuing valuables from the flames. It will be well also, if possible, to seize porcelain jars or other valuables. I can carry the elder girl; and you can take the younger on one shoulder, and carry a jar or some other valuable on the other. We had better have cloaks and broad

hats, like those of the soldiers. There would be no fear, in the confusion, of anyone noticing our faces.

"I really think, Shen Yo, that we may be able to succeed. It did not seem possible at first, but I think now that with the aid of fire we may be successful."

"I certainly don't see why we shouldn't," Rex said. "In such wild confusion as there would be, no one would notice anyone else. The great thing is to be quite sure where the girls are kept, and that we must find out to-day if possible. We will get rid of our vegetables as soon as we can, and then wander about with the empty baskets on our shoulders. We shall then see if people go in and out of the yamen. It is most likely that they will. Many will have petitions to make and some complaints to lay before the governor. Some, perhaps, will only go in to stare about. Possibly a little cash may induce one of the soldiers to point out the door of the room where the girls are confined, and that will be all that we shall want. When we have found that out we shall have to buy two suits of clothes for the girls, two cloaks and hats like those worn by the military, long lengths of rope for climbing the wall and getting down, a hook of some sort for catching the top of the wall, a sledge-hammer, a chisel for opening a door or a window, and a bottle holding a couple of gallons of spirit. Can you think of anything else?"

"We must get some provisions and leave them at the bottom of the wall before we climb up, for we must not go anywhere to buy food for the first day or two after we start."

"Yes, that will certainly be a good plan."

When they approached Chafui they overtook some other peasants also carrying in vegetables, and, joining them, they entered the town together. Numbers of Boxers in their red jackets were in the streets, and a good many of the regular soldiers. The townspeople were moving about; some were

laughing and chatting with the soldiers, others moved quietly about, evidently feeling by no means sure that the Boxers would not, before they left the town, plunder the houses.

Rex and Ah Lo were not long in disposing of the contents of their baskets, and they moved nearer and nearer to the yamen as they did so, getting rid of a large number of their goods within a short distance of the gate. They sat down for a while near the gate of the yamen and watched the people go in and out of the courtyard. Then, approaching the gate, they laid their blankets down a short distance from the soldiers standing at the gate, and entered. No questions were asked, and, crossing the courtyard, they entered the house. They saw two soldiers standing at a door and went up to them.

"What do you want?" one of them asked.

"Can we see the little white devils? We have come a long way to have a look at them." And he slipped a few coins into the man's hands.

"No, you can't see them," the man said; "the orders of the governor are strict. They won't be here much longer; the governor expects a message from the viceroy to-morrow, and then we shall put an end to them. It might just as well have been done at first. If it had, we should have been saved the trouble of keeping sentry over them for the past week."

This was serious news, but they had seen all they required. There was a door between the private apartment and the public rooms. This was closed, and the room occupied by the prisoners was next to it. Having ascertained this important fact, Rex and his follower left the house, took up their baskets, and walked off.

"I think that is as well as we could expect," Rex said. "We may take it for certain that no sentries will be placed

in the private part of the house; so that if we enter on that side we can make our preparations and light our fire without fear of being disturbed. Now we had better take a turn round the place behind, to choose the spot where we will climb over, and see if any sentries are placed on that side."

The wall was about fourteen feet high, and there was a door at the back. All was quiet, and there was a piece of waste ground behind the garden. They examined the door carefully.

"I think, Ah Lo," said Rex, "it will be better to cut round this lock, if we cannot force it, instead of climbing over the wall. That would take us time; while if the door could be opened at once we should run straight down the garden, close the door behind us, and make off without a moment's delay."

"It would certainly be much better," Ah Lo agreed. "We should have plenty of time to cut through the door after it gets dark. If we decide to do that we shall have to buy a saw and a tool for cutting a hole through which to thrust it. It would certainly be a relief to get rid of the ropes. We may as well get the other things at once, and then we can sit down in some quiet place, eat our food, and talk matters over."

When Ah Lo had bought all the various things they required, they sat down with their backs against a wall. All their purchases were stowed in the bottom of one of their baskets, the other being put into it so that no one might see what they were carrying.

"Of course," said Rex when they were seated, "it won't be an easy job. In the first place, we have to make an entrance; I don't think that there will be much difficulty about that. Then, you see, we shall have to light a fire in two rooms, one on each side, and as the flames rush out of the

doors, we must open the door of communication. Probably it is fastened with a bar. There must be a sufficient blaze to cause a panic among the sentries. For a moment there will, no doubt, be a tremendous uproar, and anyone in the passage or rooms will rush out. Then we must seize the moment to break in the door. If the sentries should keep their place, which I should think is very doubtful, we must throw ourselves upon them at once. The door once open, the rest will be easy; we shall have but to wrap the girls in the blankets and run through the fire with them. The critical moment will be that at which we open the door; we must make perfectly sure that the two sentries are taken by surprise. I have every hope that the place will be burnt down, and in that case it is likely enough that they will never give the captives a thought beyond concluding that they have been burnt to death. I think it would be a good thing to take the hangings from some of the rooms, roll them up into a bundle, and soak them with the spirit. Then, when we have taken down the bar and have the door ready for opening, we will light that bundle, so that when we open the door there will be a great blaze close to the men and at the same time they will see the flames from the rooms farther down the passage. The scare is almost certain to make them bolt, and we can then break in the other door. The noise will merely sound to them as if something on fire had fallen down, and we shall have got the girls out through the door before they can open the gate of the yard and call the sentries from the guard-house."

"I think it ought all to go right," Ah Lo agreed. "Now, master, I think that I will go back again. I must see my father and mother and tell them that I have to go away on urgent business, for that I hear the Boxers are coming to our village in the morning to search for every able-bodied man,

and that, therefore, I must leave at once. What will you do?"

"Can we return to the back of this yamen without passing through the town?"

"Yes."

"Then I will go with you. We need not bring our baskets back with us; we can make the things up into a bundle. I would rather walk home with you and return than hang about here where I might be questioned."

Accordingly they again took their baskets on their backs and returned to the village, hiding their parcels before they entered. Hearing the news they brought, several young men, who had managed to escape the last search of the Boxers, at once made off into the country. Ah Lo and Rex remained with the two old people until dusk. The old people were much distressed to hear that their son had to leave them so soon. He promised to pay them a longer visit as soon as it was safe to do so, and having left a sufficient supply of money to last them for some time, he took a tender farewell of them and started once more with his companion.

They arrived without adventure at the back of the yamen, and at once set to work on the lock, as it was now perfectly dark and the streets were already deserted except by parties of Boxers. In an hour they had cut round the lock, but then they found that the door was also held by bolts. It did not take them long, however, to enlarge the hole sufficiently for Rex to get his arm through and unfasten the bolts. They now waited until the lights in the house gradually disappeared, and then moved quietly up to it. They found, as they hoped would be the case, that the door of the house was unfastened.

Having ascertained this, they waited another hour until they were sure that everyone was asleep. Then they entered,

lit a lamp that they had bought for the purpose, and set to work. They soon piled mats and curtains near the doors of the rooms on both sides of the passage, and poured oil and spirit over them. When this was done they made up a roll six feet high and six feet long, and, saturating this with oil, carried it to the door. They then set a light to the great piles of inflammable materials in the two rooms. These flashed up instantly, and the flames came rushing through the doors. When they saw that the blaze had taken a good hold of the material they set fire to the bundle in the passage.

As this blazed up they removed the bar and flung the door open. The two sentries gave a loud cry as they saw the flames rushing out at the end of the passage, and made a simultaneous rush for the front door. Running in, Rex and his companion found that the door of the girls' prison was held by bars only. These they undid, and found to their satisfaction that the door opened, and that there was no occasion to break it down.

The light of the flames was amply sufficient to enable them to see. The two girls lay in each other's arms in one corner.

"It is all right, girls!" Rex cried. "I am Rex, and I have come here to save you!"

Then, lifting the girls to their feet, they wrapped the blankets round them. Each lifted one and sprang through the flames rising from the roll, and then through the sheet of fire at the end of the passage. When they reached the open air they released the girls from the wrappings, and, snatching up their rifles, which they had left leaning against the wall outside, ran down the garden. Once outside they felt that they were for the present safe.

Already a babel of noises was arising from the yamen—shrieks of women and shouts of men.

REX RESCUES HIS COUSINS FROM THE BOXERS.

"I hope the women won't be burned," Rex said.

"If they cannot get down the staircase they can jump from the windows," said Ah Lo.

"Thank God, girls, that we have got you out! We have some native clothes for you, but we must run for some little distance first; the fire will bring all the town out."

"Are we dreaming?" Jenny said. "Can it be really you, Rex?"

"It is, dear; you can seize me and shake me, to make sure that you are awake. Are you strong enough to walk?"

"Yes, if I am really awake."

The younger sister, however, could scarcely stand, and Ah Lo caught her up and they at once started, Jenny pouring question after question into Rex's ear as he hurried her along. When they were two or three hundred yards away they broke into a walk.

"Now we can go on steadily," Rex said. "We are absolutely safe till the morning, and by that time I hope we shall be a good many miles away."

When they had gone another mile Rex said: "We had better stop here and eat something, for we shall want all our strength for the journey."

"But how did you come to be here, Rex?"

"Well, dear, we heard such terrible news of what was going on throughout the country that Ah Lo and I determined to come out in disguise to see if we could be of any assistance to you. Of course we have heard all that has happened, so do not pain yourselves by talking about it at present. We have got stain for you to colour your skin, and the dresses of Chinese boys in which you must disguise yourselves. It would not do for you to be travelling as girls. We shall try to make our way to Pekin. Of course we shall have difficulties, but I trust that we shall get through all right.

We intend to give out that we are going to enlist in the army, and we shall have to invent some story to account for your going with us. We have got rifles, so that if we should be interfered with by any small party we shall be able to give a good account of them. We have got you out more easily than we had expected, and no one is likely to notice that you have escaped. They will have more than enough to do if they wish to save the house, and I doubt whether they will succeed in putting out the fire, for I think we set the place pretty well alight."

Indeed, it was already evident that the fire had got a great hold, for, from the point that they had now gained, the flames could be seen leaping out of all the windows on the ground floor at the back of the house. The fugitives went almost at a run for another mile, and when they stopped and looked round, the yamen was in a blaze from top to bottom. Ah Lo now set Mabel on her feet, and the two girls threw themselves into each other's arms and burst into tears.

"Now you had better eat something," Rex said, after he allowed them a short time to recover themselves. "Did the brutes feed you well?"

"We had enough to eat till to-day; they have given us nothing to-day, and we thought that that was a sign that the end had very nearly come."

"No doubt it was so. Now in the first place you must each eat and drink something."

"I don't feel as if I wanted anything."

"Never mind, it is absolutely necessary that you should eat. We must get as far away as we can before morning, and unless you eat you won't be able to walk."

The girls ate slowly at first, but as their appetites came back they managed to eat a hearty meal. While they did so Rex told them about the fighting at Tientsin, and the way in

which they had made their way into the yamen and set it on fire."

"I can only just see the outline of your figure, Rex," Jenny said, "but you seem to have grown tremendously since I saw you last."

"Yes, I have grown a good deal. Four years make a great difference at my age. You have grown a good deal too, Jenny; you were quite a small girl when I saw you last. How pleased my father and mother will be to see you both again!"

"Did they send any messages?"

"No, Jenny, and for a very good reason. They did not know that we were coming. We stole off quietly in the night, for I was not at all sure that they would let me try if I asked their permission. I left a letter for them saying where I had gone, and that, as I had Ah Lo with me, I felt pretty sure that it would come out all right. You see, I speak Chinese nearly as well as he does, and there was no real reason why anyone should suspect that we were not what we looked. Now, dear, if you have finished we will go on."

They went for some ten miles before the day began to break. Ah Lo carried Mabel for the last five, for both girls were weakened by the scenes they had gone through, the grief at the loss of their parents, and the fear as to their own fate. As day approached they went into a large field of standing corn, which rose some feet above their heads.

"Now, girls, you go on a few yards and then change your clothes. Here is the stain. You must dye your whole skin and darken your eyebrows, eyelashes, and hair. You know a great deal better than I do how your hair must be plaited into pigtails and wound up under these hats. I think you will find the clothes all right; they are just jackets buttoning up in front, and loose trousers. You can put on your own

boots as long as we are walking in an open country and there is no one about, but when we are likely to meet anyone you must put on these Chinese shoes. After you have dressed yourselves you had better lie down and have a long sleep. We shall keep a look-out; but as we entered the field in single file, and raised the stalks after us, it is not likely that, even if the owner comes along, he will suspect that anyone is in hiding here. Before you try to go off to sleep you had better eat another meal."

"Are we on our way to Pekin, Rex?"

"No, we have come north so far; for if a search is made it will be in the direction of Pekin or Tientsin. I do not think it at all likely, however, that they will trouble to look for us. They will not give you a thought at first; and when they do think of you the place will be in such a blaze that they won't be able to get at your room, and will certainly conclude that you have perished in the flames. The only possible ground for suspicion will be that the door at the end of the garden may be found open; but no one may think of going round there for some days, and at the worst they will but fancy that robbers broke in there, and, while plundering the rooms, accidentally set the house on fire. At any rate, long before the idea can occur to them that it was an attempt to rescue you, we shall be a hundred miles away."

The day passed quietly. Ah Lo and Rex in turn slept and watched near the edge of the corn. Men could be seen working in some of the fields, but no one approached the edge of the field in which they were hidden. Late in the afternoon the girls joined them, looking their character so well that even Ah Lo said that he would not have suspected them of being anything but what they seemed. A hearty meal was then eaten, and an hour after dark they started again, this time making towards the east. They passed through many

small villages during the night, and walked, they calculated, over twenty miles, Ah Lo, as before, carrying Mabel the last seven or eight miles. Again they hid during the day, and in the evening turned their faces towards Pekin. Their stock of provisions was now exhausted, and the next day Ah Lo went into a village and brought a fresh supply.

They met with no adventure until they were half-way on their journey, when one evening as they were passing through a village, the door of one of the houses opened and three men whose dress showed them to be Boxers came out.

"Hello!" one of them said, "who are you?"

"We the travellers," Ah Lo replied.

"What makes you travel so late?"

"We are anxious to push on to the next village."

"Come in here and let us have a look at you," one of them said.

"Shall we go in, master?" Ah Lo said in a whisper.

"Yes, you had better; there is a large party of them. You go on, girls; stop by the side of the last house in the village on the right-hand side."

Rex and Lo then followed the men into the house. Inside were nine others, several of them smoking. "Now where are you going to?" demanded the Boxer who had before spoken, and who was apparently the leader of the party.

"We are going to enlist in the army."

"You had better join us. I see you have a good gun; where did you get it from?"

"I got it from some men who were fighting at Tientsin and returned home wounded."

"Well, you will get others there," the man said; "you had better hand them over to us. You must stop here for he night and go on with us. It appears to me that there is

something suspicious about you. Where are the two boys who were with you?"

"They have gone on. I told them to."

"Two of you run after them and fetch them back," the man said angrily.

Ah Lo and Rex both unslung their guns from their shoulders as if to hand them over. They were still standing in the doorway, and Ah Lo shoved one of the Boxers, who tried to pass him, and sent him staggering backwards. The captain, with an exclamation of fury, drew his sword. Ah Lo dropped his rifle against the man's chest and fired. The others at once sprang to their feet.

"Don't throw away a shot!" Rex exclaimed. "Now it is begun we must finish them," and he shot down the man next him. "Step back outside the door, then only one can get at us at a time."

The rifles rang out again, and three more of the Boxers fell. The others, seizing their arms, rushed in a mass towards them.

"Fire by turns, Ah Lo," Rex said as he fired, and then drove the muzzle of his rifle with all his force into the chest of the next man coming at him; the man fell as instantaneously as though he had been shot. Two or three of the Boxers were armed with guns, and these attempted to press forward so as to be able to use them. Rex's thrust had cleared the crowd a little back, and Ah Lo shot one of the men with a gun as he pressed forward. Almost at the same moment one of the others fired, and the ball passed along Rex's arm and came out in the shoulder. With a howl the man rushed forward again. Rex and Ah Lo fired at the same moment. There were now but four Boxers left, and these charged before they were ready to fire again. Ah Lo clubbed his musket; Rex, as before, used his gun as a spear, and as a

Boxer rushed at him with uplifted sword, caught him full in the chest.

"Hold the door while I load, Ah Lo," he said.

It took but a couple of seconds to discharge the cartridge and reload and close the breech, and then Rex shot one assailant just when Ah Lo struck down another. The last man threw down his weapon, but Ah Lo's blood was up, and knowing that none of the party must be allowed to get away, he brought the butt of his musket down with all his strength upon the man's head.

"That has been sharp work, Ah Lo," Rex panted. "Now, we must be off."

"I don't think they are all killed," Ah Lo said.

"Well, most of them must be, and certainly none of the others can be in a position to take up the pursuit. We had better not wait another moment, or we shall have the villagers out on us." So saying he started to run.

"I will run," Ah Lo said, "but there is no fear that the villagers will come out. When they hear the firing they will think that the Boxers are quarrelling among themselves, and certainly no one will venture out to see about it."

They found the girls waiting at the appointed place, and they gave a cry of joy as Rex ran up.

"What has happened?" they asked together.

"The Boxers were nasty and were sending two men off to catch you, so we stopped them, and we had a tough fight, but none of them got away."

"How many were there?"

"Twelve."

"And you killed them all?"

"We shot eight of them. Ah Lo broke the skulls of two, and I knocked the wind out of the other two. Whether I killed them or not I do not know, but it is quite certain that

they cannot be in a fit condition to take up the pursuit. We can now go on again; only for the rest of the journey we must avoid villages.

"You needn't grieve for the Boxers," he said, as the girls uttered an exclamation of horror at what he had said. "As likely as not they have come from Chafui; but if not, no doubt they have taken part in some of these massacres and were making for Tientsin to join their fellows there."

"Oh, how could you do it, Rex? I am not sorry for the Boxers a bit, but it is wonderful that you two should have killed twelve of them in two minutes; I am sure the firing did not last longer than that."

"It was quick work certainly, Jenny; but with these breech-loaders one can fire all the shots in a magazine in less than a minute, and at such close quarters there was no possibility of missing one's aim. If there had been a few more of them we should probably not have succeeded so well, for our magazines were nearly empty when we had finished. Still, holding the door as we did, so that only one man could really get at us at once, I think we should have given a good account of ourselves even if there had been five or six more."

They made an unusually long journey that night; the girls would not hear of stopping, although Rex assured them that there was no chance of being overtaken. When day dawned they were more than usually careful in hiding themselves among some very high grass. Rex and Ah Lo took turns to watch all day, but to their satisfaction they saw no one hurrying along the road as if carrying a message of importance.

"I did not expect to see one," Ah Lo said; "the villagers will be frightened out of their lives when they venture out in the morning and see what has happened. I think it likely that they will at once bury all the bodies, for they will be

afraid that should a party of Boxers come along and see what has taken place, they would plunder and burn the village and kill all the inhabitants. No, I do not think there is any fear that the alarm will be given."

They continued their journey thus till they were within fifteen miles of Pekin. Here the road was no longer unfrequented during the day, bands of armed men and Boxers frequently passing along. The next day they made ten miles and then lay down to sleep. Soon after daybreak natives in carts, with vegetables and grain, came along. As soon as they had passed, the fugitives issued out, and presently overtaking one of the parties journeyed on in company with them until they reached the gates of the city. They wandered about for some hours before they found the quarter where the Legations were situated, for they did not like to ask directions, as that would have shown that they were strangers in the city. They came at last to a building where two marines were keeping guard. From these they heard that the British Legation was in the next street, and soon they were gladdened by the sight of an English uniform.

They were stopped by the sentries, but on Rex saying in English that they were fugitives from one of the missions that had been destroyed they were allowed to enter.

The Legation stood in a very large enclosure which had at one time been a palace belonging to a member of the imperial family. The gardens were charmingly laid out, and it contained several courtyards, each surrounded by buildings.

They were conducted by one of the servants of the Legation to the house of the minister, Sir Claude Macdonald, and upon Rex sending in their names they were at once admitted.

"We have made our escape, sir," Rex said, "from Chafui, where the mission has been destroyed and all save these two

young ladies, daughters of the missionary in charge, murdered. I myself am the son of Mr. Bateman of Tientsin. These young ladies are my cousins, and with the aid of this faithful Chinaman, who has for many years been in my father's service, I have succeeded in rescuing them from the hands of the Boxers."

"I congratulate you indeed, sir. A considerable number of fugitives have already arrived here. I will hand the ladies over at once into the charge of Lady Macdonald, who will see that they are well cared for."

He rang a bell and told a servant to take the girls to Lady Macdonald, and then turned again to Rex:

"We had heard reports of the massacre at Chafui, and were afraid that all had perished. I shall be glad to know how you and these young ladies escaped?"

Rex gave a brief account of the incident.

"I congratulate you most warmly on the success of your enterprise, and on the courage you displayed in undertaking it and carrying it out. It certainly seemed, on the face of it, to be a most mad-brained attempt, but it has been amply justified by the success that has attended it.

"Our position here is very precarious, and although the court continue to give us assurances of the most friendly intentions, we have the best grounds for believing that the Empress and her advisers are bent upon our destruction. However, we are making every preparation for defence, and believe that we shall be able to hold out until assistance arrives. What are your own intentions?"

"My intentions, sir, are to make my way at once down to Tientsin. My parents cannot but feel the most lively anxiety as to my safety, and my first duty is to go back to relieve their suspense. If any expedition is sent up here to your relief, I shall hope to accompany it in some capacity.

I can speak Chinese like a native, and may be useful as an interpreter. I shall, of course, leave my cousins here if you will kindly permit them to stay, for although with my Chinese follower I might make my way without difficulty through any bodies of the Chinese who may be on the road. I could hardly do so if I were accompanied by two girls, however well they might be disguised."

"Certainly not," the envoy said; "that would be quite impossible. There are, we know, a considerable number of the Chinese between us and Tientsin. They have already torn up the railway, and although my messengers do get through, direct communications are entirely interrupted. Still, as you have made the journey from Chafui here without difficulty, I should think that you might manage to accomplish the journey to Tientsin safely. Of course you will remain here a day or two. One of the members of my staff will lend you a suit of clothes." He touched the bell. "Send Mr. Sandwich here. He is one of the student interpreters," he said, turning again to Rex, "and is about your own height; and I have no doubt that his things will fit you well. I shall be glad if you will dine with me and afterwards give me more detailed accounts of your adventures."

In a few minutes the young man made his appearance. "Mr. Sandwich," Sir Claude said, "I will hand over this gentleman, who has just arrived from Chafui, to your charge. He will only be staying here for a day or two, for he is going to try to make his way down to Tientsin. I shall be obliged if you will lend him a suit of clothes while he stays here."

"Certainly, I will do all I can to make him comfortable."

"I should be obliged, sir," Rex said, "if you would allow a surgeon to dress my arm. A bullet entered just above the wrist and ran up to my shoulder. I think the wound is

going on all right, but it is rather painful, and I should be glad to have it dressed properly."

"Certainly, I will send our doctor to the college at once. He will be there almost as soon as you. You did not tell me that you had been hit."

"It is not a serious wound, sir; the bullet only just went under the skin, and I fancy that when it has once been properly dressed it will give me no more trouble."

"You are well disguised," Sandwich said as he left the room with Rex. "I am sure that I should not have had any suspicions, however closely I inspected you. How did you manage to get here from Chafui?"

"I speak Chinese like a native. I was born in Tientsin, and was sent home to England four years ago; but as my father was most anxious that I should keep up Chinese, he sent with me one of the coolies who had always been my special servant, and so I came back speaking it as well as when I went."

"We heard that there had been a massacre at Chafui."

"Yes, I managed, with the aid of my man, to rescue my two cousins, who are the daughters of the missionary there. I was just in time, for they were to have been murdered on the following day."

"But how was it that you were not murdered yourself?"

"For the simple reason that I was not there when the massacre took place. The news of the massacre came to us at Tientsin, and I set off with my man to see if any of them had survived and if possible to rescue them. This we effected by setting fire to the governor's yamen, where the girls were confined, and carrying them off in the confusion that ensued. The only adventure we met with on the road was that we were interfered with by a party of a dozen Boxers. We had a fight with them; but as we had breech-

loaders, and they were jammed up in a room, we had no difficulty in disposing of them all."

"By Jove, that was a plucky thing," Sandwich said; "and so you are going off again?"

"Yes, I am in a hurry to get back to my people, who must be in great anxiety about me."

"Well, this is our college," the young man said, stopping before a building of some size. "We are all trained here for the Chinese Consulate service. I will take you to my room first and rig you out. We shall be having a meal directly, and then I can introduce you to the fellows, when I promise you a hearty reception."

Half an hour later Rex went down in a suit of white clothes to the dining-room. He had already asked Sandwich to hand over Ah Lo to the proper quarter, where he could get rations and lodging. He was introduced to eight or ten young men who were studying at the college, and, after the meal was over, related the story of the rescue of his cousins. The narrative excited great interest, and he was warmly praised.

CHAPTER V

WITH SEYMOUR'S COLUMN

THAT evening after dinner Rex told the envoy in full the story of his adventures. The chiefs of two or three other Legations were present, and all expressed great surprise that a mere lad should have carried out so desperate an undertaking.

The next morning the doctor called to see Rex.

"You are thinking of going down at once, are you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I have come in to tell you that your cousins cannot possibly go with you. Their recent experiences have been a terrible strain on them, and as a result of the reaction, both are completely prostrated. The younger one is very feverish, and is, I expect, in for a sharp illness."

"I am very sorry to hear that, sir, though I cannot say that I am surprised. They have held on very well, but they were weak when they started, and throughout the journey they have had no chance of picking up strength. I was afraid that they would break down before they got here. At any rate I shall run down to Tientsin to see my father and mother, who are no doubt suffering great anxiety, and shall then, I hope, be able to arrange to come back for them. I suppose I can see them before I start?"

"Certainly, but the shorter your visit the better. You may be quite sure that they will have every attention here.

I don't think there is any reason for being uneasy about them. It is the natural reaction after the strain, and I hope that in another fortnight or so they will be able to travel. I will go across with you to their room now."

Rex at once went over.

"I have come to say good-bye, Jenny," he said, as he entered the shaded room in which his cousins were lying. "The doctor says that you won't be fit to travel for another fortnight, and you know I must run down to see my father and mother, who will by this time be in a great state of alarm about you. I shall be back for you, and I hope if I come at the end of a fortnight I shall find you both in a fit state to go. If you are not, I shall wait till you are. Good-bye, dear!"

"Good-bye, Rex! Of course you ought to go to Tientsin, and we shall look forward to your return. Thank you a thousand times for all that you have done for us, and thank Ah Lo too!"

Mabel was lying with her eyes half-closed and her cheeks flushed with fever, and Rex, seeing that it was of no use trying to rouse her to say good-bye, kissed Jenny and went quietly out of the room.

"I shall keep your clothes until I come back again, Sandwich," Rex said when he was taking leave of his friend.

"You are perfectly welcome to them if you don't bring them back," the other laughed. "I have any number of suits, and if trouble comes on we shall not be particular about washing."

"I expect I shall be back before long, for if there is a row here I should like to be in it."

Rex and Ah Lo went to the railway-station in time for the train which started at ten o'clock. Several merchants and others were going down also. The journey was a tedious

one, for the train travelled slowly and stopped frequently. It was just breakfast-time next morning when they arrived. Rex walked in unannounced just as his father and mother were sitting down to breakfast. They leapt to their feet with cries of surprise and delight.

"I cannot blow you up now, Rex," his father said after the first joy of the meeting had passed, "but it was the maddest thing that I ever heard of. I am too glad, however, at your safe return to scold you. We were beginning to lose all hope of your return. We thought you might get to Chafui, and of course it was a great satisfaction that you had Ah Lo with you; but when you found that everyone had been massacred, what prevented you from returning at once?"

"The fact, Father, that I found that they were not all massacred. My uncle and aunt had both fallen, but the girls were prisoners in the governor's yamen. It was a close affair, for they were to have been given to the Boxers to be massacred the very next day. We got them out, however, and took them safely to Pekin, and they are at present staying at the Legation."

"You have saved the dear girls!" his mother exclaimed; "that is indeed good news. But where are they?"

"They are at Pekin, Mother. They bore up splendidly until they got there, and then they broke down, and the doctor said that they would need careful treatment and rest before they could be moved. So I ran down here to tell you of my safety, and am going back again in a few days to bring them home. I will give you full particulars when I have got into my own clothes and had some breakfast. We brought a good stock of provisions with us, but finished the last morsel yesterday afternoon. It has been a tremendously long journey, and, as you may imagine, I am pretty peckish. Before sitting down, however, I will run upstairs and change,

for I must have a wash before eating. I shall be down again in ten minutes."

He soon returned, and his father and mother asked no questions until he had finished breakfast, except that his mother asked how he had left the girls.

"I think they will both be better for a rest, Mother," he said. "They both look fagged, which is not to be wondered at, considering all they have come through, but they are a good deal better than when I first saw them."

As soon as breakfast was over, and before he questioned Rex further, Mr. Bateman sent for Ah Lo.

"Ah Lo," he said, when the Chinaman came in, "you did wrong to aid my son to carry out this enterprise. However, as it succeeded so well I cannot blame you, and indeed must thank you heartily for having carried Rex safely through the matter."

The Chinaman smiled. "I think it is the other way. Mr. Rex carried me through the affair. He always told me what to do; I did just so and it came out all right."

"Well, I shall not forget the great service you have rendered us." Ah Lo bowed and went off.

"Now then, Rex, give us an account of your doings, for at present I cannot imagine how you managed to get the girls out from the governor's yamen."

It took Rex more than an hour to relate his adventures, for he was very frequently interrupted by exclamations and questions from his father and mother.

"It was a wonderful rescue," his father said, when he had brought that part of the story to a close. "It seems simple enough as you tell it, but I really can hardly imagine how the plan occurred to you. There the girls were shut up in the strong house of a governor, with sentries over them and a guard but a few yards away. It was a problem that might

have puzzled the sharpest brain, and it was carried out without the slightest hitch. It does you extreme credit, Rex, and I feel proud of you. Well, go on with your story."

There was a fresh outburst of surprise when Rex related the fight with the twelve Boxers.

"Well, my boy," Mr. Bateman said when Rex brought his story to an end, "after that you can be trusted to go anywhere, and I don't think your mother or I will in future feel anything like the same anxiety concerning you as we have experienced this time."

"And now, Father, how do matters stand here at present?"

"Things are quiet. A good many sailors have come up, and although a large number of the rebels are still round the town, we have no fear whatever that they will be able to take the place."

"I think the fighting will be pretty hard work, Father, if, as I think there is little doubt, the Boxers attack in earnest. But what are the regular Chinese troops going to do?"

"I think the envoys still hope that they will stand aloof; but as far as I have learned, the general opinion is just the other way. The Empress and her ministers profess that the Boxers are a peaceable people who only desire well for the empire. They have issued a few shilly-shallying edicts, which can be read both ways, but it is generally believed that the Boxers have been put in the foreground because the Empress thinks they are more than sufficiently strong to destroy the Legations and kill every white and native Christian in the country. She doesn't want the responsibility. Before Europeans she can, if she chooses, disavow their actions, while at the same time professing her inability to control them, and declaring that as the will of the people is that no white men shall henceforth live or trade in China

she must bow to their wishes. Many think, therefore, that if the Boxers can do the work alone they will be allowed to do it; if not, the Imperial troops will join them.

"It is quite certain that an enormous number of native Christians have been massacred in various parts of China, and I have heard that some have been murdered in Pekin itself. I hope that enough troops will be collected to go up before long. Troops have come in from all directions, but I am afraid it will be at least a couple of months before anything like an army can be moved forward. From the ships now here probably only two thousand men could be spared for the purpose."

"I doubt whether that would be enough, Father. There are hordes of Chinese between this and Pekin, and a large number of them are armed with the best rifles. They have breech-loaders of all sorts, and you know we must do them the justice to say that they fought bravely enough round here. I fancy they will fight even better to prevent us from getting to Pekin."

"It is by no means certain, Rex, that in the first place we shall not have to fight on for our own existence. Great numbers of Boxers and other ruffians throng the town, and if they know their own business they will not be fools enough to allow an army to gather here at all. As to the Taku Forts, I believe they will be taken just as easily as they were last time. Still, the larger vessels cannot come up the river, and the smaller ones will probably have to be escorted up by troops. They will doubtless be opposed fiercely, and not improbably we shall be attacked here at the same time, in which case we may have to fight hard."

"All right, Father! I should like it all the better. Knowing, as we do, how they have massacred hundreds of missionaries and their families and many thousands of native

Christians, we shall feel a real satisfaction in fighting these fiends."

"And yet, Rex, a good deal of allowance must be made for them. You must remember that China has always been an exclusive country, and that the Chinese appear to have an ingrained hatred of foreigners. To begin with, we come here because they don't want to buy our opium, and we fight them and compel them to open Chinese ports to trade. Well, the Chinese are not fools, and as long as it was only a question of trade they might put up with us, seeing that they obtained as much advantage from trade as we do. This, however, was not enough. We invade them with a vast crowd of missionaries, who settle themselves in all parts of the country, build themselves houses and churches, and set to work to convert the Chinese. Naturally the Chinese don't like it. Certainly we should not like it ourselves if hundreds of Chinamen were to settle down in all our towns, open joss-houses, hold out all sorts of advantages to proselytes, and convert the lowest and most ignorant class of the population to Confucianism or Buddhism. But this is not all. Missionaries take the converts under their protection, set up a little imperium, demand the right to judge and punish their own people, and generally to set the local authorities pretty well at defiance; and the Catholic bishops have actually insisted upon having the title, rank, and power of Chinese viceroys.

"All these things are odious to the mass of the people, and when, as at present, they find the whole of the European powers engaged in a general grab of fresh ports, they say this thing must stop. I need not say that I hold these massacres in abhorrence, but if they had simply brought down all the missionaries to the treaty ports and said to them, 'If you come outside these walls you will be at once put to death,' I should say that they were acting just as most

European powers would act in similar circumstances, and that from their own point of view they were acting wisely. It would be necessary, of course, for us to retain ambassadors at Pekin to protect our treaty rights and to settle any disputes that might arise, but beyond that I would, if I were the Emperor of China, forbid any foreigner from going beyond the treaty ports, which would be all so strongly fortified that they could defy any attack. Of course, foreigners might be allowed to enter the Chinese service if invited to do so, drill their troops, manage their dockyards, build their railways, and conduct their mines.

"To my mind, the game of grab that has been going on of late has been shocking. The Russians who stepped in to prevent the Japanese from obtaining any benefit from their defeat of China were the first to begin by their enormous appropriation of territory. We seized a port opposite to them, and the Germans, Italians, and French all seized ports and territories. Can one wonder that China was moved to the core, that this sect of Boxers, which has existed for a very long time, suddenly became a violent political association, and that the Empress has gladly availed herself of their assistance? It would be strange indeed if it were not so. You must remember that the Chinese as a race are extremely intelligent. Owing to the denseness of the population and the poverty of the people the weakly die off in childhood, and the struggle for life is so severe that the wits of the people become sharpened. They are the cleverest bargainers in the world. Every transaction is a battle in which purchaser and seller try to get the better of one another. Physically they are fine men; and their lives being for the most part hard, they have little or no fear of death.

"When you take all these things into consideration, you can see that there is a great deal to be said for the action

of the Chinese. They have perpetrated horrible cruelties upon the missionaries and native Christians, but they have lived under a cruel régime. Capital punishment under the most atrocious conditions is very frequent among them, and they have become habituated and hardened to it. You must remember that at home as late as the reign of Queen Elizabeth any persons found begging were executed, or, as a mild punishment for a first offence, had their hands or ears cut off.

"Of course, if we are attacked, I shall aid in the defence; but although I have lost my sister-in-law and her husband, I shall feel no personal animosity towards the Chinese, for I consider that we have, from their point of view, given them ample grounds for endeavouring to get rid of us."

"Well, I don't think that I ever thought of it in that light, Father, but it certainly does seem rough on them that we should seize port after port on the smallest pretext, and send our people interfering with their customs and religions all over the country. Certainly at ordinary times they have always seemed to me an inoffensive set of people, placid and good-tempered, which makes it all the more extraordinary that they should go in for such hideous massacres. However, Father, whatever excuse they have, it is quite certain that we must not let them take Tientsin if we can keep them out of it."

"We shall certainly do our best," Mr. Bateman laughed, "and I have no doubt that we shall succeed. Still, we may have some tough work before us.

"We have received a despatch from Macdonald urgently asking that troops should be sent up at once," Mr. Bateman said to Rex two days after his return.

"Well, Father, if things really do look bad I should like to go back again. I told the girls that I would, and I cer-

tainly should like to be there on my own account if there is any fighting."

"Probably there will be fighting here also, Rex."

"Yes, Father, but there is no doubt that you will be able to beat them off here. Marines and blue-jackets will be sent up from the ships to take the place of those who are going forward now. Besides, no doubt an attack will be made on the Taku Forts, and you know they are not formidable. I don't think, however, that it is anything like so certain that they will be able to hold out in Pekin. The Legations cover a big extent of ground, and what with the Boxers, the lower classes of the city, and the Chinese army, there will be a tremendous pressure upon them. Now, as Ah Lo and I managed to get the girls away from Chafui, it seems to me possible that, if the worst comes to the worst, we may manage to rescue them again. At any rate I know it would be a big comfort to them if I were there."

"I don't know, Rex," his father said gravely, "that I should be justified in letting you go. Still, you got so wonderfully out of the last business that I am disposed to let you have your own way in this. Besides, if there is fighting here, which I think probable, you will, of course, want to take part in it, and are as likely to be killed here as at Pekin, and as it will certainly be a comfort to the girls to have you there, I shall not say 'No.' There will, however, be no occasion for you to go up with the troops. Possibly on their arrival there things will calm down, and in that case the troubles are more likely to begin here by the sea. I think there is scarcely a shadow of doubt that the Taku Forts will be bombarded, and that the ships will open a passage for the gun-boats up the river. You had better, therefore, wait for a week at any rate, by which time we shall hear whether matters have settled down in Pekin."

"Very well, Father, but I do not think there is a chance of that. There is no doubt that the Empress and her favourites are secretly urging on the Boxers, and although these will probably begin an attack, they will be joined in the end by the Imperial troops. I have no doubt, however, that I shall be able to get there in time. You see, Father, if I take part in the defence of the Pekin Legations it will be something to talk about all my life."

"I am afraid, Rex," his father said with a smile, "that, although I do not say that you are not anxious to be at hand if your cousins are in danger, you would be just as eager to go if they were not at Pekin at all. I begin to think that I have made a mistake in your education, that I should have done better if I had kept you by me and sent you to the College of Student Interpreters at Pekin. It seems to me that you are more fitted for the profession of a knight-errant than a sober trader."

"Oh, I don't think so, Father! When things are quiet I shall be quite content to be quiet, to work hard all day, and to take a ride or sail in the evening."

"Well, we shall see when matters do settle down, Rex, as I have no doubt they will after a time. I shall be quite content if we resume trade at the treaty ports as before, and I hope that the result of this war will not be the further breaking up of China."

The next morning the glad news was heard that strong detachments from all the ships of war were coming up and were going to march on Pekin. Admiral Seymour was to be in command, and the force would amount to about two thousand.

"This is splendid, isn't it, Father?" said Rex.

"It is capital news, my boy; but two thousand men are but a small body to go through a bitterly hostile country

defended by an army which, including the Boxers, cannot be put at much less than forty thousand men. There is no doubt that the railway will have been greatly damaged by the Boxers, and if our men trust to that, they will have no means of transport when they come to the point where the line is destroyed, which will probably be about half-way between this and Pekin. At the same time it is undoubtedly right that the effort should be made. Our countrymen cannot be allowed to perish if it be possible to save them. We know that so far they are unhurt, for the telegraph wire is still open to Shanghai, and we get messages from there, contradictory ones, it is true, but still, in spite of the varying nature of the reports, there is little doubt that up to the present time the Legations are safe.

"It is probable, indeed, that those four hundred men who went up to Pekin six weeks ago as guards to the Legation have so far saved the situation. The Chinese, as you know, did all in their power to prevent them from coming. Fortunately the ambassadors had by that time so fully recognized the danger of the situation that they brought them up in spite of the Chinese Ministers. It is but a small force to resist a well-armed army and a vast crowd of Boxers and the rabble of the town, but there must be a good number of white men there, missionaries of the city, and many who have made their way in from country stations. The European shopkeepers, too, and such merchants as have not left, will between them considerably raise the fighting force. Besides, you told me that at any rate some slight defences had been thrown up when you came away; no doubt these have since been increased. It is fortunate that all the Legations are fairly close to each other, and can probably be connected with each other without much difficulty.

"The German, French, Japanese, and Pekin Hotels make

practically one block, the Spanish is but a short distance away, the British Legation is separated from the Palace of Prince Su only by the street, the Russian Legation lies close to the British, and the United States Legation and Russian Bank face it. I should fancy that the line of defence will include all these. The Dutch Legation is isolated on one side, and the Italian on the other. The Austrian and the Belgian Legations also lie apart, and close to the former are the post-office and customs. These, however, are all that are outside the probable line. I should hope that the Tartar wall, which overlooks the whole and is close to the United States and German Legations, will also be held. It is a big area for seven or eight hundred men to defend; but it was not a much larger force that held Lucknow, and what can be done in one place can be done in another."

"I do hope, Father, that you will allow me to go up with the troops. If, as you think, they are not able to reach Pekin, I could push on in disguise and get into the town as easily as I left it. I don't think there will be the least difficulty about that. I am very anxious about the girls, and might, if the worst came to the worst, escape with them in disguise, as I did before. Even if Admiral Seymour's force should fight its way into the town, I should think that they will be in a similar position to that in which General Havelock found himself when he fought his way into Cawnpore. He would certainly be able to defend the Legations against the whole Chinese force, but he might not be able to cut his way out, encumbered as he must be, with a mass of native Christians who certainly could not be left there to be murdered. Even putting the girls aside, I should like, above all things, to take part in the defence."

"I don't know that you would be able to go with the troops even if I gave you leave, Rex."

"Well, you see, I should become an interpreter. They will be sure to want some men with them who know the language, to question prisoners, and buy stores, and so on."

"Well, I will think it over. I must speak to your mother before I settle on such a question as that. Of course there will be a good deal of danger, but I have very little doubt that as soon as these troops go up, the Chinese will attack us here. Large numbers of them are in the neighbourhood, and if they find they cannot resist the advance of the force, they will close in behind it and march upon this town. Certainly we could not hope to hold the native quarter, but I feel sure that we could defend the settlement. Still, we might lose many men. There will, of course, be no fear of our having to stand a long siege, for the fleet are sure to batter down the Taku Forts, and the gun-boats will shortly be sent up the river. Besides, the troops from India and Port Arthur, and the Japanese, will soon arrive, and will no doubt come up to our succour. I can quite understand your desire to take part in the siege, to say nothing of your idea of getting the girls away. Going up with two thousand men also is a very different affair from starting off on your own account."

The next morning at breakfast Mr. Bateman said: "I have talked the matter over with your mother, and though she is very reluctant to part with you, she has given her consent, as I have pointed out to her that naturally at your age you want to take part in a defence which is likely to be historical, and that you would certainly be a comfort to your cousins and might be of vital service. You have already shown great presence of mind and resource, and I have no doubt would do so again in case of necessity."

"But you must promise me," Mrs. Bateman said, "that you will take care of yourself, and not expose yourself need-

lessly. You must remember, my boy, that, fond as we are of your cousins, you are all in all to us. You are our only child, and for our sakes you must promise not to thrust yourself needlessly into danger."

"I will not run risks more than I can help, Mother. Of course, if I do get into Pekin, I must take part in the defence."

"Yes, Rex, of course, I understand that; I only beg of you not to expose yourself recklessly."

"I promise not to do so, Mother. Of course I shall take Ah Lo with me. I am awfully obliged to you for giving your consent; it would be a splendid thing to go through the siege. It is not like an ordinary siege in an ordinary war. They have attacked us and perpetrated the most horrible massacres all over the country; they have lied through thick and thin; they are treacherous and cruel brutes, who will certainly show no mercy if they capture the place, so that I shall feel that I am fighting in a good cause, and that these men deserve all they will get."

Tientsin presented a busy appearance. Troops arrived fast by train from the coast, and it became known that an expedition of some two thousand men was going to advance to Pekin under the command of Admiral Seymour.

"Do you think, Father, that you could get leave for me to accompany the expedition. I could make myself useful as an interpreter."

"I was introduced to Admiral Seymour this morning, Rex, and the idea did occur to me then, but I thought it well to wait until I talked the matter over with you again. It would certainly be far less risky to go with the troops than to make your way up in disguise, for by all accounts the Boxers and the roughs who have joined them are clearing out the villages and putting numbers of people to death. So

you see your disguise could not be any great protection. However, I shall see Admiral Seymour again this afternoon, for I am supplying a good many articles they require. If you go with me I shall introduce you to him, and we shall hear what he says about it."

Admiral Seymour was at the railway-station seeing to the detrainment of a strong body of marines and blue-jackets and to the unloading of their stores. Mr. Bateman waited until he was disengaged, and as he was leaving the station went up to him.

"I have sent the things you wanted to the depot, and shall be willing to send any further supplies that you may require. Everything in my store is entirely at your disposal.

"Will you allow me to present my son to you. He has only lately returned from a most hazardous journey which he accomplished in disguise. He went to save two girl cousins of his who were the sole survivors of a mission station at Chafui. He succeeded in rescuing them and taking them to Pekin, where he was obliged to leave them, as they were prostrated by what they had gone through. He is very anxious to return there; and as he speaks Chinese perfectly, he thought perhaps that you would be kind enough to allow him to accompany your expedition in the character of an interpreter. He might be useful in questioning prisoners or villagers. He could carry arms also, for he and a native servant annihilated a party of twelve Boxers who attacked them while they were bringing his cousins down."

"I have already got two or three interpreters, Mr. Bateman, but I have no doubt that I could do very well with another. I will attach him to the company of marines and blue-jackets from the *Centurion*."

"Thank you very much indeed, Admiral!"

"Ah, here is Major Johnston, who commands the ma-

rines!" said the admiral; "I will put you under his charge at once.

"Major Johnston, I shall be glad if you will take charge of this young gentleman. He speaks Chinese fluently, and no doubt you will find him very useful as an interpreter. He is most anxious to get up to Pekin, because two of the young ladies there are his cousins. He will probably have a yarn to tell you of how he rescued them from the Boxers at Chafui. You will, of course, attach him to your mess."

"Very well, sir, I shall be very glad to have someone with me who speaks Chinese; we are pretty sure to get hold of some wounded Boxers, and we may get valuable information from them."

Again thanking the admiral, Rex went off with the major, whose men were quartered in the customs-house. He was soon busy translating orders to the coolies who were assisting in bringing up cases of ammunition and other stores. In a couple of hours all was quiet.

"My father will be very glad, sir," he said to the major, "if you will take up your abode at his house. I have no doubt that all the officers will be quartered among the residents. I think that we can very well house four, and, if they don't mind squeezing, six or seven."

"Thank you, Mr. Bateman! I don't know whether we have been told off to quarters, but if not, I will very gladly accept your offer."

Rex hurried home, and his father returned with him and assured the officer that it would be a great pleasure to him to have as many officers as the house would hold, and that he could very well contrive to take in ten of them.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Bateman! It will take some little time to see the men properly quartered. I notice that

a quantity of straw has been provided for them. What time do you dine?"

"We will fix our dinner hour to suit you. We generally dine at seven."

"That will suit us very well. I command two companies, and have six officers, whom I will bring with me. You will have to take us in the rough, for we have only the uniforms that we stand in."

"You shall dine in your shirt sleeves if you like, Major."

Rex returned with his father, and there was for a short time some bustle in the house getting bedrooms ready and making arrangements for dinner. At seven o'clock the officers arrived and were introduced by Major Johnston to Mr. and Mrs. Bateman. They were a merry party, for the officers were all in high spirits at being selected to take part in the expedition. When they heard that Rex had only returned from Pekin the week before, they asked him innumerable questions as to the country and the strength of the force that would be likely to oppose them.

"I think that you will have harder work than you expect," he said. "A considerable portion of the railway is certainly pulled up, and, judging by the number of fires I saw as I came down at night, the enemy must be in very strong force. I have no doubt that they will fight hard, for the Boxers believe that they are invulnerable, and will fight with fanatical fury."

"We shall soon teach them that they are mistaken as to their invulnerability," one of the officers laughed, "and I don't think that any number of armed peasants, for that is what they are, will stop us."

"I hope not, indeed," Rex said. "I only say that I think it will be harder work than you expect."

"Now, Mr. Bateman," the Major said, "I hope that you

will tell us the story of the rescue of your cousins, of which the admiral told me."

"I have had to tell it so many times since I came back," Rex said, "that I really hope you will excuse me."

"Oh, no, that is mistaken modesty on your part!"

"I will tell it for him," his father said; "it is a good story, and does the boy great credit."

"Then I will go and see if everything is ready outside," said Rex.

It was half an hour before he returned, and by that time his father had finished the story. The officers all warmly congratulated him when he re-entered the room.

"I wish I had done it," one of the young lieutenants said. "I would have given anything to have carried out such a plan."

"I suppose you have not been in England at all," the Major said; "for if you had been you would scarcely have been able to speak Chinese so well."

"Yes, he has been four years there," Mr. Bateman said, "but I sent over with him a Chinese boy, who has always been his companion, and Rex had two days off school each week to go about with him and so keep up his knowledge of the language. I intend to go home myself in a few years' time, and as he will then be left in charge it is of the utmost importance that he should keep up his Chinese. Latin and Greek would be of no value whatever here, so I arranged that he should only take up English subjects and English games."

"A capital plan, Mr. Bateman. His knowledge of the language has already stood him in good stead."

"What is the latest news?"

"We had a telegram to say that the American Mission buildings at Tung Chau, twelve miles from Pekin, have been abandoned by the missionaries, and have been looted and

burned by the Chinese soldiers sent to protect them; and further, that seventy-five native Christians, who have been trained for years by the American missionaries, were massacred there. The British Legation summer residence in the hills near Pekin has also been burned. A telegram from Shanghai says that there has been a fight between General Nel Ilsi Chong, with three thousand men, and the Boxers, and it is reported that the general has been superseded for his trouble."

"When do you leave?"

"The rest of the force will be up to-morrow, and we shall start on the following morning. Altogether we shall have nine hundred and fifteen British, three hundred and fifteen Germans, three hundred Russians, one hundred and fifty-eight French, one hundred and four Americans, fifty-two Japanese, forty Italians, and twenty-five Austrians."

"Rather a mixed lot," Mr. Bateman said. "It is as well that our contingent is so strong. Had it not been so, Admiral Seymour might have found some difficulty with the commanders of so many nationalities."

"Yes, it is certainly well that we constitute nearly half the force—more than half the force, if we count in the Americans and Japs, on both of whom we can rely. However, I don't think that there will be any trouble with the Russians, Germans, and French, who won't be able to understand each other, and as it is so short a march they will have no opportunity of coming to any mutual understanding. We might even count in the two small parties of Austrians and Italians as going with us."

CHAPTER VI

IN PEKIN

ALL were hard at work on the following day making preparations for the advance. Rex acted as interpreter to the major, and got on quite familiar terms with his officers. The start was made early the next morning in four troop trains. The men cheered lustily as they started, and the residents of the town all gathered to give them a hearty send-off. Rex managed to get a place in the train for Ah Lo, and took with him in a small bundle the disguise he had worn at Chafui. He was perhaps the only person in the train who did not feel absolutely confident of a triumphant march to Pekin, but he had made up his mind that should they have to fall back he would himself pursue his journey with Ah Lo.

For a time the train passed through cultivated ground, but the work of the enemy was very soon visible. Portions of the line were torn up in many places, and attempts had evidently been made to destroy the bridges. Several times the train had to stop in order to make repairs, but owing to the large number of hands available the work was performed so rapidly that there was only a short delay at these points. At Lo-Fa for the first time the Boxers were seen actively engaged. The plate-layers' cabins were in flames, and the telegraph poles had been cut down, and men were engaged in destroying them. The villages bordering the line were also in flames, and the inscription, "Kill all foreigners," was posted up everywhere. The Chinese troops alighted and fired several vol-

leys at parties of Boxers, but apparently without doing any execution, their ineffectual efforts exciting much merriment among the allied troops.

A mile farther smoke was seen rising from several villages, and General Nieh refused absolutely to continue the journey, declaring that the whole country was evidently swarming with Boxers, and that it was highly dangerous to advance. He insisted on returning to Lo-Fa. Admiral Seymour strongly urged him to remain there with his men, but without success; he and his soldiers were firmly convinced that it was useless to try to fight the Boxers, who, they believed, were invulnerable to shot. After the Chinese had left, the troops were detrained. The work of repairing the line had for the last few miles been very heavy, and as it was already late they halted there for the night.

So far their work had been altogether unimpeded by the enemy, who had apparently fallen back as soon as the laden trains were seen approaching in the distance. The troops had grumbled a good deal at the cowardice of the enemy, but consoled themselves with the idea that they had not yet gone half-way, and that no doubt the Boxers would make a stand later on.

There were plenty of materials for making camp fires, and these were soon blazing, and as night closed in, songs in various languages rose from the bivouacs of the different nationalities. The officers gathered round their own fires and chatted on the prospect before them.

"Your anticipations have not been fulfilled thus far, Bateman," one of the lieutenants said to Rex.

"No, but it is not yet time for them to be fulfilled. It was only during the first half of my journey down that I saw the Boxers' fires all over the country. They will become thicker and thicker as we near Pekin, and in the end I expect that

the whole Chinese army will come out to meet us, swollen by the rabble of the town."

The expedition moved forward again in the morning. It was soon evident that in the country through which they were now advancing the Boxers had carried out their operations more thoroughly than in that through which they had already passed. In many places the railroad had been taken up for some hundreds of yards, and the sleepers carried off and burned, while the whole of the telegraph poles had been cut down and the wires carried away. The troops were very soon all detrained again and employed in the work of restoring the line, an operation which was only carried on with great difficulty.

In the meantime Lieutenant Smith of the *Aurora* went forward with a party of three officers and forty-four men to try to reach Neting, thirteen miles ahead, to prevent more damage being done to the line and to hold the railway-station there. He was attacked soon after he started. At three villages in succession he drove the enemy out with ease; but at half-past ten a determined attack was made on him by about four hundred and fifty Boxers, who charged in line with great courage. His little force, however, repulsed them with heavy loss; but as ammunition was then beginning to run short, and the enemy was still increasing in strength, Lieutenant Smith retired. As great bands of Boxers could be seen in the distance, Major Johnston was sent forward with sixty men to examine the line ahead.

"You may as well come on with me, Bateman; we shall very likely fall in with some villagers and perhaps capture a Boxer, and so get information as to the position of the enemy in front of us and the state of the line."

"I shall be very glad to come, sir."

Ah Lo, without receiving any specific orders, fell in as a

matter of course in the rear of the marines. They went steadily on, keeping two miles ahead of the leading train, and when eight miles above Lo-Fa they saw a body of Boxers, which they reckoned about three thousand strong, streaming out from a village on the left. This force did not make directly for the little party, but bore towards their rear with the evident intention of cutting them off. They had with them a good many mounted men who, dashing forward, crossed the railway behind them, while the men on foot made for a partially-burned bridge and a village commanding the line.

"Fall back at the double!" Major Johnston called. "Not too fast; it is certain that we shall have to fight them, and it won't do to put ourselves out of breath. Keep up a quick fire as you go; halt when you fire, and take steady aim. They won't like the long range of our bullets. I don't suppose we shall do them much harm, but our fellows will hear the firing at the wagons and we shall soon have a party up to our assistance."

Rex and Ah Lo unslung their rifles and joined the marines in their steady fire. The return of the enemy was not effective; only a few were armed with guns, and these were not of long range. For a mile a running fight was kept up, twenty or thirty of the enemy being killed. They nevertheless persisted in their endeavour to cut off the party. When, however, he saw a body of marines and blue-jackets coming up at the double, the major at once halted his men.

"Now, my lads, you can give them independent fire as quick as you like; there is no fear of their closing with us now."

The Boxers who had crossed the line began to move back and join their companions, and the approaching blue-jackets at once opened fire upon them with rifles and Maxims. The

reinforcements soon joined Major Johnston's party, and under his lead attacked the village and drove the Boxers from it. Following hotly upon their heels, they forced them also to retire from another village with the loss of some forty killed and wounded.

Rex's services were at once called into requisition. He slung his rifle behind him, and set to work to interrogate seven wounded Boxers who had fallen into our hands. From them he learned that farther back the line had been almost entirely pulled up, that the forces there were very numerous, and their strength had just been increased by the addition of ten thousand regular troops, who had been nominally disbanded in order that they could join the Boxers, while the Government might be able still to affirm that the Boxers were acting in defiance of their orders and that no Imperial troops had joined them. They said, too, that a considerable proportion of the troops in Pekin had been brought to the southern gate to oppose the relieving army if they broke through the forces opposed to them. Rex learned that two days previously there had been fighting in Pekin and that it was expected that the Legations would all be taken in the course of a few days.

The army advanced no farther that night, but the next day pushed on to Lang Fang, which was half-way to Pekin. They found all the station buildings destroyed and three hundred yards of the track torn up. Boxers were seen busy in the work of destruction, but when a shell was dropped among them they fled. A patrol that went out reported that a mile and a quarter of the track had been destroyed.

The news that he had learned from the wounded Boxers on the previous day had excited in Rex a burning desire to push forward. The position in Pekin seemed to be precarious, and he became so impatient to get to the principal

REX INTERROGATES A WOUNDED BOXER.

scene of action that he determined to leave the army and make his way up in disguise. It was evident that if the line was, as it seemed, almost totally destroyed beyond this point, the progress of the relief column must be extremely slow. As the troops must hold to the railway, for they had no other means of carriage, it seemed to Rex highly improbable that they would be able to fight their way into Pekin. Having made up his mind, he went to Major Johnston.

"I am most anxious to go forward," he said. "We know that the Legations are attacked, not seriously perhaps at present, but they may be so any day. It appears to me very doubtful whether this expedition will be able to fight their way into the town, and if they do so it must be a considerable time before they get there. I do not know that if the place were taken I should be able to get my cousins off, but at least I could try. At any rate, I have brought my native disguise with me, and have no doubt that I can make my way into Pekin. How I shall get into the Legation I don't know, but I think that by mixing with the Boxers I shall be able to make my way in at night. Is there any occasion, sir, for me to inform Admiral Seymour of my intentions?"

"None at all, Bateman. I shall probably have an opportunity of speaking to him in the morning, and shall mention to him that you have started to make your way in alone. It is a risky business, I know, and I wish you well through it. I begin to think that you were quite right when you said that the opposition would be greater than we expected. We only reckoned upon the Boxers, and did not think that they would tear up the railway. It is now evident that our difficulties will increase with every foot that we advance. I trust, however, that if we do have to fall back, the Legations will be able to hold out. Our people may be driven from some of the outlying places, but I should think that if the

whole of the defenders are concentrated at our Legation they ought to be able to defend it as long as food and water hold out. You did not hear, I suppose, when you were there, how they were provided in that respect."

"No, I did not hear anything about it. You see, when I was there the ambassadors still clung to the belief that the Empress was favourably disposed towards foreigners. As far as I could hear, no one else thought so; but I am afraid that they did not believe it necessary at that time to lay in provisions for a siege, and if the native Christians take refuge with them they will want a very large supply.

"Very well, sir; then as soon as it is dark I shall make off. I shall make straight for the river and follow its course. It is certain that the greater portion of the enemy will be gathered close to the line of railway, and I don't anticipate any difficulty in making my way up. Pekin is only some forty or forty-five miles from here, and I shall enter it to-morrow. I shall, of course, make a circuit of the city and go in at the northern gate, and in that way I shall probably have no difficulty whatever until I get near the Legation."

That afternoon Rex said "Good-bye" to the other officers of his acquaintance, and as soon as it was dusk, coloured his skin, touched up his eyebrows and eyelashes, painted a line from the corners of his eyes so as to give them an upward inclination, fastened on his pigtail again, and set out with Ah Lo. As he had anticipated, they experienced no difficulty in making their way up. Occasionally they saw parties of Boxers on the banks of the river, and had to make detours to avoid them, but by morning they saw the towers of Pekin ahead. Turning aside into a field of standing grain they lay down and slept for some hours, and when they awoke they made a detour round the city and entered by the northern

gate. As no troops were stationed here, they went on unquestioned into the city.

As they advanced they came upon many ruined houses, and at one point a large tract had been cleared by fire. Many dead lay in the streets, for the most part horribly slashed and mutilated. Bands of roughs were still searching ruined houses for loot. In some parts business was still going on; the better class of shops were all closed, but those that supplied the poor were open, and the inhabitants were going about their usual avocations as if nothing had happened.

As they neared the Legations they could hear occasional firing. In this part the shops were all closed, and there was no traffic whatever in the streets. At some points large numbers of Boxers were gathered. Avoiding these, they turned into a narrow lane which led towards the British Legation. They went nearly to the end of this, and here Rex entered a doorway, took off his Chinese clothes, under which he had his own, wrapped up his pigtail, and put over it a Scotch cap he had carried with him. Then he and Ah Lo started out at a run for the Legation. Here and there men were grouped on the walls, and these, on seeing a European coming along, shouted words of welcome to him. Half a dozen shots were fired from neighbouring houses, but they arrived at the entrance untouched. A dozen soldiers were stationed here.

"You have managed that well, sir," the sergeant in command said as they entered. "Have you come far?"

"I have come on from the relieving force. They are at Lang Fang."

"Will they be here soon, sir?"

"I very much doubt whether they will get through at all. The line is all torn up, and they will be opposed by an

immense force. I fear that you will have to wait till a much bigger force is gathered."

"That is bad news, sir, but I expect we shall hold out all right. They don't seem very anxious to come to close quarters."

Rex went straight to the ambassador's quarters and sent in his name, and he was at once admitted.

"So you are back again, Mr. Bateman?"

"Yes, sir; I came up with the relieving force two thousand strong under Admiral Seymour. They had reached Lang Fang, but I have great doubts whether they will get much farther, as the railway has been completely destroyed, and they are without means of carriage. There is no doubt that they will be met by an ever-increasing resistance as they move forward, and twenty thousand regular troops have moved round to the south gate to oppose them if they get as far as that. The communications are already cut behind them, and so large a force is concentrated near Tientsin that that town will probably be attacked.

"The Taku Forts will be attacked very shortly. Troops are on their way from India, Port Arthur, and Japan, and I have no doubt that before long an army will be gathered sufficiently strong to fight its way up. But I fear that it must be some weeks before they are in a position to do so."

"Do you bring any despatches for me?"

"No, sir; I was afraid that if I mentioned to the admiral that I was coming on, he would object, so I came off of my own account. I had learned that the Legations were being attacked, and I was most anxious to be here to cheer my cousins up, and to endeavour to do what I could for them if things went badly."

"Very well, Mr. Bateman, I am glad of the news that you have brought me, though it is not satisfactory, but I own

that I have had my own doubts whether the force that is coming up was strong enough to make its way here. It is better, however, to know the worst. We shall be glad of the assistance of your rifle and that of your man, for we are very short-handed, and even the aid of two rifles is not to be despised. You had better take up your quarters, as before, at the college."

Rex withdrew, and at once went to the doctor's house.

"I am glad to be able to tell you," said the doctor, "that the young ladies have now pretty well recovered, and if the railway were working I should say that they could very safely be taken down to Tientsin. As it is, however, they will have to wait until reinforcements come up."

"Then I can see them, sir?"

"Certainly; the elder girl is quite recovered, and the younger one is convalescent, but is still weak. It will do her good rather than harm to see you, for they have necessarily been somewhat lonely, as everyone here is busy. The ladies have all been occupied in making sacks to hold earth for the fortifications, and the girls have therefore been left more to themselves than they otherwise would have been."

Rex at once went across to the house. The girls leapt up with a cry of delight as he entered.

"Oh, Rex," cried Jenny, "we are glad to see you! When did you return?"

"About half an hour ago. I had to come up in the disguise I wore before. You know, I suppose, that we are quite cut off from Tientsin now?"

"So we have heard, and they say that there is going to be fighting here?"

"Yes, but there is no doubt that we shall beat them off. You need not be uneasy."

"Oh, we are sure of that! I feel quite different from what

we did before. For the past three or four days I have been helping to make sacks, and even Mabel has done a little. And how are Uncle and Aunt?"

"They are all right. I believe my father will have his share of fighting, for a great force of Chinese has gathered outside the town, and they expect to be attacked. It is hoped, however, that the ships will destroy the Taku Forts, in which case the light craft will make their way up to Tientsin. Then, of course, every man that can be spared from the ships will join the relief column."

"But I thought that they were on their way up now, and that we were expecting them here to-day?"

"I am sorry to say, dear, that I think there is very little chance of their coming at all at present. I came up with Ah Lo."

The girls looked at each other in dismay.

"Then how long do you think it will be before they really come up?"

"I am afraid it will be many weeks. Large reinforcements of British troops are coming from India, Russians have been despatched from Port Arthur, and any number of Japanese, and French, and Germans are being sent forward; but it must be some time before they are all here, and we must make up our minds that we are going to hold our own."

Then he changed the subject.

"And so you are getting stronger, Mabel? You are looking ever so much better."

"Oh yes! I am feeling ever so much better, and the doctor says I shall soon be strong and well again.

"We are getting quite full here now, for numbers of the native Christians are coming in for shelter. Everyone is told off to do something. Jenny is to help serve out food to

the women and children, and I expect that I shall soon be able to assist also."

"Yes, I expect we shall all be made useful," said Rex.

"Ah Lo has come up too, I suppose?"

"Yes, he came with me as a matter of course, and we shall both aid in the defence."

"I wish I were a boy," Jenny said. "I should like to help kill some of the Boxers. I dare say a good many of those who were at Chafui have come here and will be among those who are going to attack us."

"You will be just as useful in your own way, Jenny, as if you were a boy and could carry a gun."

"You must give us each a pistol, Rex, so that if they should take the place we can shoot ourselves. We have both made up our minds that we will do that rather than fall into their hands again. You don't think it would be wicked to kill ourselves, do you?"

"Certainly not, Jenny; but in the first place I don't think that there is much chance of their capturing the Legations, and in the next place I hope that if they did so, Ah Lo and I should be able to get you out again in disguise. But at any rate I don't think you need have any fear. There are four hundred soldiers here, and the employees of all the Legations would certainly make a hundred more. Besides these there are the merchants and other people, and I expect they will form a corps out of the Christians who have come in. Most of these Legations are strong buildings, and it will be hard if we cannot beat off any attack. It is lucky that all the Legations lie within a short distance of each other, and can all be defended together. When I leave you I will go round and see what has been done to fortify them."

He stayed chatting with them for another half-hour, and then went down to the college.

"I have turned up again like a bad penny, Sandwich," he said, as he met his friend, "and am quartered here."

"We shall all be heartily glad to have you with us, and I regard you and your man as a valuable reinforcement. Have you heard that this morning the Boxers have begun to massacre the native Christians? I believe that great numbers have been killed."

"They ought all to have come in here," Rex said.

"No doubt we should have done the best we could for them," Sandwich said, "but we should have had a lot of difficulty in feeding ten thousand of them. Though I am awfully sorry for the poor beggars, their presence here would scarcely be an advantage, for they would hamper us terribly in our defence. You will have to put up with bad cooking unless some of these Christians that are coming in turn out to be decent cooks, for the servants and coolies are all leaving. You should see Sergeant Herring talking to them as they go out!"

Rex laughed. He had already made the acquaintance of the sergeant, who had been twenty years at the Legation, and who was in general control of its arrangements. He was a big man, with a powerful voice and an authoritative manner, and ruled the coolies with a rod of iron. He was a well-known figure in the city, and was regarded by the populace as being only less important than the ambassador himself.

"I can quite fancy him," Rex said, "and how the coolies would sneak off under the thunder of his voice. Well, I should say that we are just as well rid of the coolies. I don't suppose they could have been relied upon. They are not like the native Christians, who, knowing that their lives are forfeited if the Boxers get in, will certainly be faithful even if they are not very useful. By the way, I have not

brought your clothes back. I came up in a suit of my own under my disguise, but I was afraid of carrying a bundle. They will come up, then, washed and ironed, when all this is over."

Sandwich laughed. "All right, Bateman! I sha'n't be able to get much washing done now, and shall hail the arrival of a clean suit when—that is a very vague word—*when* they come up."

There was a good deal of excuse to be made for the coolies and servants. They were almost all drawn from the population of Pekin, and their families, according to the Chinese law, would assuredly suffer were they to remain at the Legation. This would account for the difference between their conduct and that of the native servants in the Indian Mutiny, for these, in the great majority of cases, remained true to their masters.

CHAPTER VII

FORTIFYING THE LEGATIONS

"NOW, Sandwich, tell me what have been the events here so far."

"Well, things have been gradually getting worse since you went away. It is difficult to say what was the first act of violence, but on the ninth the Boxers burst into the pavilion on the race-course and threatened some of the students, one of whom, in order to get away, had to shoot a man with his revolver. On the tenth the Summer Palace of the Legation, on the hills, was burnt, and since then it has been impossible to go beyond the town. By the evening of the eleventh all the whites in the city were gathered at the various Legations, but the streets were still crowded with people, and business went on as usual within this quarter. The Chinese teachers in the British Legation, however, all struck, the coolies began to desert, and some property belonging to the Roman Catholics was looted. This morning the outlook was still more threatening. Mysterious marks appeared on the doors. A party of Germans and Italians raided a temple where the Boxers were said to be drilling, but they only captured a few weapons and a quantity of the red cord which the Boxers use as girdles. This afternoon things looked still more serious. Two of the Legation servants were cut down while shopping, and orders were given to clear the streets. In a short time all the shops were shut and the crowd cleared out. If you had arrived yesterday you would have witnessed the usual bustle

instead of empty streets. Later on there was a fire in the streets, and the marines turned out, but it proved to be the French clearing the street near their Legation. At night there were fires in many parts—the American Mission, the Eastern Roman Catholic Cathedral, and the Presbyterian Mission were all in flames, and to the east there must have been half a square mile of shops in flames. All through the evening we heard firing in the city.

"Still later a large party of Boxers, carrying torches, moved down towards the Austrian Legation. A machine-gun mounted on the wall was in readiness for them, and when they came within a hundred and fifty yards it opened fire. The torches were immediately dropped and the Boxers bolted. The Austrians turned out to pick up the dead, whom they expected to find strewn in the street, but not a single one was seen, and it was discovered next morning that the bullets had cut some telegraph wires where they crossed the street nearly thirty feet above the level. Of course we had a good deal of laughing about it this morning, but it was a very unlucky affair. Had the machine-gun been well aimed it would have done great execution, for the Boxers were all crowded together, and it would have been a very valuable lesson. As it was, however, it only confirmed the Boxers in their belief in their invulnerability.

"This morning we heard that the South Cathedral was on fire. That takes you up to the present time. Oh, by the way, we hear that the tower over one of the gates has been burnt."

"What is the actual line we hold?"

"Well, at present it goes from the Tartar wall to the Imperial wall by the side of the French Legation and the customs-house, and runs from the north bridge along by the side of our Legation across some houses to the Russian

Legation, and then by the side of that across Legation Street to the Tartar wall. The Americans and Russians defend the west corner, the Germans and French the southeast, the Austrians the northeast, and the British the northwest. Of course the thing is only beginning yet, and there has been no organized attack, but no doubt we shall have plenty of it before long."

"What are the Chinese authorities doing?"

"They occupy themselves principally in encouraging the Boxers in every way, and in the next place in sending in assurances to the ambassadors that everything is perfectly peaceful and that they need be under no uneasiness whatever. At the same time Prince Tuan, the head and patron of the Boxers, has been appointed to the head of the Tsung-li-yamen, which is equivalent, you know, to our ministry. Several of the moderate members, moreover, have been turned out of it, and their places filled by creatures of Tuan. I really wonder that they think it worth while to keep up the farce of friendliness."

"Ah! there is the dinner-bell. At any rate we can for the present enjoy our meals; we may not have much to enjoy in that way presently."

They had scarcely sat down when there was an outbreak of musketry fire and a call for reinforcements. All had brought their rifles into the room with them, and, catching these up, they ran out. The fight was over, however, before they got to the scene. It was upon the north bridge that the sentries had been firing. A party of Boxers had come down from that direction, and after a volley had been poured into them, had charged, but had fallen back on receiving another, leaving two of their number dead upon the ground. Two wounded also were taken prisoners.

During the night they were several times aroused by the

sounds of volley-firing, but as these were not followed up, no one stirred. They learned in the morning, however, that the Boxers had come down from all the various roads leading to the Legations, but had retired on finding that they were strongly guarded.

The next morning the Boxers started a number of large fires in the west, and as reports came in of the massacres of Christians in that quarter, Dr. Morrison, the *Times* correspondent, got together a relief party, who went out and brought in a large convoy of refugees, and terrible tales of the scenes of slaughter that they had witnessed.

So far the Ministers had done nothing to save these unfortunate people, being apparently afraid of giving the Chinese Government the excuse for declaring war against them for their interference between the different classes of their subjects, and for the present, though they were protected, they were given no rations, and were dependent entirely on what small supplies they brought in with them, or the charity of the merchants and traders. Later in the siege, however, they rendered invaluable service, and it was to their zealous labour that the safety of the Legations was finally due. They were housed in Prince Su's palace, which was generally called the Fu, and their occupation of this was in itself of immense service, as the artificial hills in its grounds commanded the east walls of the British Legation, and covered the Japanese and French Legations from the artillery fire in their rear.

After breakfast Rex, Sandwich, and several other student interpreters went round the whole line of defence. The barricades were extremely weak and only calculated to check for a moment the rush of the enemy; they consisted merely of Chinese carts turned on their sides across the road. Beyond, however, the quiet and deserted streets spoke eloquently of

the threatened danger. Sentries were thrown out well along these, and within that range a few of the European shops kept their doors open, and officers and servants of the Legations went out and bought provisions. No great effort had been made to gather in stores, as the general conviction was that Admiral Seymour's column would soon be up.

The next day a fire was started near the tower known as the Chien Mên, the great gate leading into the Chinese city. It began in a shop which did a great sale in foreign medicines, and spread rapidly. The people worked hard to carry off their property to a place of safety, and for the most part conveyed it through the gate and stowed it away in a moat which was at that time dry. The whole quarter was soon in flames, and frequent explosions were heard as the flames reached the shops stored with petroleum and fireworks. The conflagration raged all day. Towards five o'clock the fire spread to two small arcades running through the gates, and the wooden shops blazed up furiously. The flames ultimately reached the beams supporting the roof of the tower, and in a short time the whole edifice was in flames, presenting a splendid spectacle.

Rex spent the greater part of the day watching the fire, and brought his cousins out to look at it.

"Why should the Chinese wish to burn their own town?" Mabel asked.

"Simply because they are savage brutes. It is perfectly astounding that all these quiet patient shopkeepers do not fall upon the Boxers and smash them up. I should say that millions of pounds worth of damage has been done already, for all the principal trading quarters have been destroyed. One can understand the people looking on placidly while the European buildings are burnt, but when it comes to their own houses one would have thought that the most peaceful and

quiet people would be excited to madness and would attack with fury the scoundrels who are doing all this damage. I think they would anywhere else in the world. I cannot see what the Boxers expect to gain by it. At present they are practically doing nothing against us, and are simply destroying the property of their own people. In one respect they are absolutely benefiting us, for they are making a great clearance round our lines, and are thereby adding to our power of defence; for however brave the Boxers may be they will hardly face our rifles across that open space."

All this time the attitude of the Chinese soldiers was friendly. Those on guard at the Chien Mên did not interfere with parties of sight-seers who went out there. Occasionally they were seen to fire at the Boxers, and although there were one or two affrays with them these were brought on by the recklessness of the Russians and Germans, who fired upon them without any reason.

The next morning Rex saw a party of marines with a few civilians going out of the gate, and hearing that they were to attack a temple in which the Boxers were torturing some Christians, he called to Ah Lo and followed them. The building lay a little to the north of the Austrian Legation. They surrounded the place and effected an entrance, when they found that the Boxers, having fastened their captives to the walls, were performing incantations preparatory to murdering them. They opened fire at once. The Boxers made desperate attempts to escape, but as they were hemmed in on all sides, every one of them was shot, and their captives were then released and brought into the Legations.

The Russians were that day busy in pulling down some houses which lay near their Legation. At present the British authorities were still in doubt, and although there were many houses near which would have constituted a great danger to

the defence had they been fired. no attempt was made to imitate the example of the Russians.

"The apathy that our people display is perfectly astounding," Rex said that evening as the students were chatting together. "Everyone else, as far as I see, is conscious of the tremendous danger, and yet Ministers allow themselves to be continually humbugged by the Empress and her advisers. They really seem to be inviting disaster."

"It certainly is remarkable," Sandwich said. "We shall be lucky indeed if we don't suffer for it. Even in the matter of provisions their negligence is astonishing. If we had set to work at once when the danger began we could have brought in all the stores within a quarter of a mile round and should have been in a position to carry on the siege for three months. As it is we are little more than living from hand to mouth, and if the streets round us were burned, as those by the Chien Mên gate were, we should not have ten days' provisions left in the place. I do hope that the Boxers will make so earnest an attack that the big-wigs can no longer close their eyes to the danger of the situation. Of course it is heresy for us to say so, but it is what every man here, outside the official circle, thinks."

"Yes," another said. "I have no objection to any amount of fighting, but I do object to fight on an empty stomach when there is no reason whatever why we should be fasting. I suppose your cousins are all right, Bateman?"

"Yes, they are quite recovered and are ready for anything—to load as we fire, or to exist on a dry crust. You know how they have suffered at the hands of the Boxers, and they will go through anything to see them routed."

"Well, there is one comfort," another put in, "when the Boxers do attack us in force there can be no more shilly-shallying. The ambassadors must see then that we have to

stand a siege, and will have to make an effort to get some provisions in. I have not a shadow of fear that we shall not be able to beat off the Boxers and regular troops too, but I am afraid of hunger."

"So am I," Rex agreed. "Two ounces of bread and a drink of water is a very poor régime to fight on. Thank goodness we have plenty of wells in the Legations, and shall not have thirst to fight against; but water pure and simple is a pretty poor diet."

Sunday the seventeenth passed quietly, except that there was a fight between the Germans and the Chinese regular troops, for which the former were to blame. The next day a courier arrived from Tientsin with the news that the Roman Catholic Cathedral there had been burnt down. No news had come of the relief force, and there was a general feeling of disquietude concerning it. On Tuesday a man who had been sent off with letters to Tientsin returned, saying that he had been unable to make his way through. The day passed tranquilly; everyone was still discussing the expected arrival of the admiral, and fears began to be entertained for the first time that he might fail to reach Pekin, or that, even if he did, he might not be able to fight his way out again, cumbered as he would be by the non-combatants from all the Legations. The barricades, however, were being gradually strengthened, and supplies could still be bought from the shops round them.

As evening approached it was reported that the Ministers were about to hold a council, and it leaked out that an ultimatum had been received from the Tsung-li-yamen, calling upon them to leave the city the next day, as the allies had threatened to take the Taku Forts. The question was discussed at the gathering, and the feeling was unanimously against going. All felt that no confidence whatever could be

placed in any undertaking the Chinese might give to protect the convoy on its way down. If they were to decide on retiring they would require a large number of carts to carry food, for they could not possibly now desert the native Christians, and with only six or seven hundred men to protect the long line, it was morally certain that the whole would be massacred on the way down. The council agreed, therefore, that it was better for the Europeans to stay and defend themselves to the last than to place the smallest confidence in the sincerity of the Chinese or their promises of an escort.

There was a general feeling of relief throughout the Legations when it became known that the Ministers had answered guardedly. Their reply, indeed, was simply an enquiry as to what amount of transport would be supplied, and what would be the strength of the escort. They were not aware that Admiral Seymour was retreating at the time, and that the Taku Forts had been already captured.

The next morning the Ministers met again. No message had been received from the yamen, and the German Minister set out with only his secretary and a couple of Chinese servants to go to the yamen and ask for their reply. On the way he was attacked and killed, and his secretary was wounded. Although the loss of life was to be regretted, the affair was in one respect a most fortunate one, for it showed the Ministers how critical their position was. It was clear now that if the life of one of the Ministers on his way to the courts was not respected, even the most timid could no longer place the smallest confidence in the promises of the Empress and her counsellors. The situation was at once changed. There was no longer any hesitation, no longer any feeble hope in the promises of the Chinese Ministers; there was nothing to do but to fight, and at once the apathy that had come over

the Legations was at an end. Nothing was thought of but defence.

The whole strength of the Legations was now employed in building strong barricades and in collecting stores. The first was important, the second even more so. Those searching for stores met with unexpected good luck. Two of the three foreign stores lay within the line of defence, and all the provisions in the third were speedily brought in. The searchers came upon a large wheat-shop crammed with grain, a large store of fodder was found within the line, and in many other shops large or small stores of provisions and eatables were discovered and secured. A store of coal was also discovered, and all through the day provisions were brought in in carts or by hand. From all the other Legations the people began to pour in, as it was decided that the British Legation was the most defensible, and must be the rallying-place. This building presented a wonderful scene of confusion. Ministers, their secretaries and servants, civilians, sisters from the mission, a few European traders and merchants all mingled together, talking in half a dozen languages.

The American mission brought in with them one thousand seven hundred Christians, who were placed in the Fu; seventy missionaries were encamped in the little chapel; the Legation students moved their beds into their mess-room, and gave up their quarters to the visitors; the second secretary's house was given up to the Russians, and the doctor's to the Americans. Every room in the Legations was closely packed, and many took up their quarters under the numerous verandas. Four American ladies were lodged in the room hitherto occupied by Rex's cousins, and the girls were greatly interested in the crowd and bustle, which was all novel and strange to them after their quiet life in the mission-house at Chafui. The ball-room of the Minister's house

was given up to the ladies, and their beds were so closely packed that it resembled a great hospital. The military officials were encamped in tents, while many others were prepared to sleep in the open air. Boxes, bundles, and bales were piled and scattered everywhere. Some people, while working actively, laughed and joked, others sat disconsolate and miserable. All the unemployed men at the Legation worked hard helping the immigrants and trying to effect a semblance of order.

Four o'clock was the hour at which the ultimatum expired, and exactly at that hour firing began, and one man was killed and another wounded. The artillery available for the defence was absurdly small; the Italians had a one-pounder, the Americans a Colt, the Austrians a machine-gun, and the British an old Nordenfeldt, which could not be relied upon to fire a half dozen shots without jamming. The supply of rifle ammunition was also exceedingly meagre; the Japanese had but one hundred rounds apiece, the Italians one hundred and twenty, the Russians one hundred and forty-five, while the French, Germans, and British had from this up to three hundred.

In the course of the afternoon the marines had captured and driven in small flocks of sheep and three or four cows. The garrison had, however, to depend for meat principally upon the ponies and mules belonging to the officers of the various Legations and the merchants and missionaries. Of these upwards of one hundred and fifty were tied up in various parts of the Legation. In other respects the provisions that had been collected—wheat and rice, groceries of all sorts, wines and spirits—were sufficient to supply the whole occupants of the Legations for a considerable time.

Now that the suspense was at an end and they knew what was before them, all went about their work with brightened

faces and an air of energy and determination that had for weeks been wanting. If a stranger had looked in upon them he would hardly have guessed that the die had just been cast and that the issue was battle, and battle against overpowering odds. All were ready to meet the worst.

Directly after the first outburst of firing it was reported that the Austrians had, for no apparent reason, abandoned their Legation without an attempt at defence. Though within the line of defence, the Austrian Legation was a separate outpost; but its abandonment necessitated the withdrawal of men from the customs-house, which lay behind it, and was a strong and well-constructed building. All the customs staff were therefore ordered to retire to the British Legation, and at the same time the British advance post on the north bridge across the canal between our Legation and the Fu had to be called in. All this caused the day which had been so bright and hopeful to end with a feeling of depression.

Rex had been busy all day bringing in and piling stores and turning his hand to work of all kinds. In the evening he went in and had a chat with the girls.

"We are all glad," he said, "that it has been settled at last that we are to stay here and fight. The murder of the German Minister was the very best thing that could happen to us, for it opened the eyes of all the others, and showed them that the Chinese were, as everyone else knew, wholly untrustworthy. We really were afraid yesterday that the Ministers would accept the Chinese offer to send an escort down with us. If they had done so, it is absolutely certain that none of us would ever have reached Tientsin. As it is, we all believe that we can hold out for a month at least, and perhaps a good bit longer. You may be sure that every

nation will spare no effort to gather a force sufficient for our relief.

"It is a pity that we have not a better stock of ammunition. If there is fighting every day, three hundred rounds, which is all the most fully-supplied have got, will not go very far, and ammunition is a thing we cannot manufacture. I doubt, however, whether the Chinese will attack us in earnest, and I am certain that if they do, we shall repulse them as long as ammunition holds out, and even after that we shall make a pretty stiff fight with the bayonets and other weapons. At any rate, girls, it will be a long while before I have to tell you to put on your native dresses again, and before I begin to look out for some quiet spot on the walls where I can let you down when the defence is finally over."

"If the worst comes to the worst," said Jenny, "I have no doubt you will rescue us somehow. We have absolute faith in you and Ah Lo. I shall do whatever you tell us without hesitation."

"You may be sure that I shall leave nothing undone to secure your safety, but we won't think of that for a long time yet."

Next day it was found that the Belgian embassy had been burnt down in the night. As it was some distance from the rest, however, the destruction was of no consequence. It was now decided that the semicircular barricade in front of the entrance to the Legation should be strengthened and the Nordenfeldt placed upon it in such a position as to command the roads by the side of the canal to the north bridge. To enable the gun to do its work properly, however, it was necessary that a line of young trees by the side of the canal should be cut down. This was a particularly dangerous operation, for a party of Boxers had established themselves behind the

bridge, and were ready to pick off anyone who approached the trees. The Japanese, however, had built a brick bar across the road on their side of the canal, and the guard there managed to some extent to keep down the fire of the Boxers, while the man who had volunteered to cut down the trees bravely proceeded to carry out this work. He was a powerful man, and refused all assistance. He accomplished his task without being hit, though he several times had marvellous escapes; but unfortunately, two days later, he was killed while engaged on similar service at another point.

By this time things were settling down a little in the British Legation, where nearly the whole of the fugitives from outside and the members of the other Legations were assembled. A general committee was organized, at the head of which were several very energetic civilians. This was divided into several sub-committees, each charged with a particular class of work. Some attended to the sanitary arrangements, others to the more equitable distribution of the available space; some undertook the commissariat arrangements, others the maintaining of the barricades. All the ladies in the Legation were now employed in sewing sand-bags. The available canvas was speedily used up, and other materials had to be impressed: sheets, curtains, and hangings of all kinds, table-linen, old dresses, pillow-cases, and in fact every article that could possibly be applied for such a purpose. Parties of coolies opened a road through the south wall of the British Legation and the intervening houses into the lane at the back of the Russian Legation, so that the Americans and Russians could have easy access to the British Legation, and could retire into it if unable to maintain themselves.

A party of volunteers set to work, and built a brick wall in place of the wooden balustrade on the upper veranda of the

First Secretary's house. This was a large building, and offered a fine mark to the Chinese on the Tartar wall, who had indeed rendered it quite uninhabitable.

The bell-tower of the Legation was now made the head-quarters of the municipal government. Here the names of the members of the committees were posted, and all therefore knew to whom they could apply for any sort of work for which they were fitted. Notices were also posted containing scraps of news, translations of edicts, etc. This spot, therefore, became the general rendezvous. The tower stood at the junction of four roads, all shaded with trees, and was only once struck during the siege.

Rex was at work from morning till night, now carrying sand-bags, or building entrenchments, now distributing food, or taking his place with Ah Lo at some point which the Chinese were attacking and endeavouring to drive them off. Whatever he did Ah Lo was by his side, and the Chinaman's great strength was invariably of considerable value.

One of the greatest privations which the besieged suffered at first was want of water. The Legation was amply supplied for ordinary wants, but it was feared that the immense extra demand would cause the wells to run short. Happily the rains were very heavy, and when it was found that the level of the water was maintained, the regulations as to supply became less stringent, and though little could be had for washing there was no lack of drinking water.

The hospital was one of the first things organized. At present the number of wounded and sick was small, but it was certain to increase rapidly. At the head was Dr. Poole of the British Legation, and Dr. Velde of the German. There were two or three lady doctors who had come in with the missionaries, a few regular nurses, and any number of volunteers. At present, however, there was small need for

their services, as there were but five or six invalids to be attended to.

On the twenty-second there was a terrible alarm, for the guards of all the other Legations poured in suddenly. As the attack had not seemed to be specially severe, this for a time was unaccountable, but it appeared that the retiral had been made by order of Captain Thomann, the senior officer. The Ministers hastily met; Sir Claude Macdonald was appointed to the chief command, and orders were at once issued for the guards to return immediately to their posts. Had the Chinese known that the Legations had all been abandoned they could have occupied them without resistance, and the result would have been a terrible disaster.

On that day the besieged learned that one of their greatest dangers was fire. At three points the British Legation was particularly exposed to this danger. On the north the Hanlin Academy, which contained a magnificent collection of Chinese manuscripts, many of great age, was separated from the wall of the Legation where the stables were situated, and the out-buildings of the Minister's house, by a narrow lane only a few feet wide. Behind the Chinese secretary's house, which adjoined the wall, were several native buildings, while the southeast corner of the Legation was threatened in a similar way. These houses were all built in quadrangular form, and the central courtyard was covered in summer by a mat roof. At five o'clock in the afternoon the Boxers fired one of these sheds. The flames leapt up fiercely, and the secretary's house became at once involved. There was a general rush to the spot, and men dashed into the kitchens and outhouses adjoining the wall and began to strip down all the woodwork, and to carry out everything portable, the Chinese meanwhile keeping upon them a harassing fire from every available point.

The moment the work was done and the danger over, volunteers hurried off to demolish the buildings adjoining the south stables, and, working far into the night, succeeded in doing so. It was not thought that any real danger could arise from the Hanlin, which was considered sacred by the Chinese, as it was full of memorial and literary tablets. It contained the finest library in the empire, and was the repository of the state records. At the same time it was thought prudent to open a passage through the lane into the building in order to prevent its being occupied by the Chinese.

Captain Poole called upon Rex and a few others to join him in the work. They had only just begun when someone ran up to them with the news that smoke was issuing from the building. They worked desperately. The danger was great, for a strong wind was blowing. A body of marines was at once called up, and a hole having been knocked through the wall of the building they poured in. Fighting sharply they drove the Boxers from the building, and then endeavoured to extinguish the fire, but in vain. All then set to work to prevent the fire from spreading to the buildings of the Legation. Water was brought up, buildings demolished, trees cut down. Fortunately the wind at this moment fell, and although the backs of the outhouses and stables were charred and blackened, they did not catch fire. The great hall was occupied as soon as the fire burnt down, and a wall having been built to cut off from the ruins, it was held till the end of the siege. Thus the efforts of the Chinese to bring about the destruction of the besieged only left them stronger than before.

While the inmates of the British Legation had been thus occupied, other fires were raging, one near the French and another near the American Legation. At the latter the

Russo-Chinese Bank was fired, and the Americans, aided by Chinese Christians, had desperate work to save the Legation. All the houses in Legation Street, from this point to the Chien Mên, were destroyed.

All next day firing was maintained heavily from every possible point. The Boxers kept up a continuous fire, to which our men replied but slowly, as the orders against waste of ammunition were very stringent, everyone being forbidden to fire unless he could clearly see his man. On this day the Chinese began shell-fire with the gun that they had mounted at the Chien Mên. The American Legation was struck once, the German several times, but for the most part the shells flew overhead.

As it was evident that if the Chinese planted guns on the Tartar wall they would command the whole of the Legations, the Americans and Germans, who were nearest to the wall, went out to seize it. They were very stoutly opposed, but they advanced steadily, firing volleys which effected terrible destruction among the Chinese gathered there, and pushed on until they came to a barricade on which two guns were mounted in a position too strong to be attacked by so small a force. They occupied the wall, however, along the whole line fronting the two Legations, erected a barricade on it behind the American Legation, and another beyond the German Legation. In order to accomplish this they made such a demand for sand-bags that the bell which was ringing for service, for it was Sunday, was stopped and everyone set to work to make them. Just as the work began the alarm-bell rang out. A fire had broken out near the south stables. Some of the houses at this point had been destroyed two days before, but many were still standing. There was a large house in the stable-yard. This had originally been built for the use of the escort, but had been

handed over to the consular students, who, having grown too numerous for the accommodation, were in their turn superseded by the missionaries. The missionaries, however, had occupied it but a short time, as the upper stories had been handed over to the marine guard. It was a dangerous position, for near it was situated a market known as the Mongol Market, and from the houses on the opposite side of this the enemy kept up a constant fire.

To the left of the escort house was a gate in the wall leading to the market, which was principally used for the sale of firewood and fodder. From this gate the houses extended along the wall as far as the Temple, which had been pulled down a few days before. The enemy set fire to these houses, but it was round the wall that the battle was serious. The enemy had advanced close to the walls, and, setting up their flag there, poured a continuous stream of bullets into the burning house, and especially against the door. Had this fallen they would have been able to fire straight into the yard. Volunteers rushed up and began to pull down the stables nearest to the door, and to build up a wall some eight feet thick behind it. The door was already on fire. Some deluged it with water, others worked in the smoke to build the wall. Captain Halliday and a party of marines went out by the breach in the wall on the north and charged through the burning houses to clear out the enemy. This he succeeded in doing, although he was himself seriously wounded, and in three hours the danger was past. The attack, however, had been of great advantage to the besieged, for the Chinese had destroyed all the buildings adjoining the Legations, and had in a few days accomplished what must otherwise have been done by the defenders at the cost of enormous labour.

From that time forward, although they were exposed to

great danger at times, the garrison was free from any anxiety about fire.

The next day was comparatively quiet. The lower veranda of the First Secretary's house needed barricading, for several bullets had made their way in. That morning two of the ponies which had been shot there during the night were cut up and distributed. This was the first experience the besieged had of pony-meat, and at first they tasted it with considerable doubt. Henceforth, however, it became the regular fare, and was received with general approval. It made excellent soup, and though, when cooked in a joint, it was apt to be hard, it was very good with curry or rissoles.

In the afternoon the firing suddenly ceased and a man bearing a white flag took his place on the north bridge, with a board on which was written in Chinese: "Imperial command: To protect the Ministers and stop firing; a despatch will be sent to the bridge of the canal."

This caused great excitement. Some suggested that the reinforcements might be at last at hand, others thought that it was a trap to throw us off our guard. The experienced were of opinion that it was merely a sign of the vacillation that existed among the Empress and her advisers, and that Prince Ching and Jung Lu had for the moment got the upper hand and persuaded the Empress of the madness of the course that was being taken. The day went on, however, and no despatch was sent in. The time was employed in strengthening barricades. The Chinese, too, made good use of the interval by erecting a barricade across Legation Street, facing that adjoining the Russian and American Legations. At midnight a tremendous fire was opened on the Legations from all sides. Shells frequently passed overhead, and the Legations were swept by a hail of bullets. Everyone was up and ready to repel an attack, but none was made, and after

an hour the fire ceased as suddenly as it had begun. It was evident that the war party were again in the ascendant.

All sorts of reports were current the next day. The besieged had learned that the Taku Forts were captured on the eighteenth, and they began to calculate that the relieving force might arrive on the twenty-eighth.

Everywhere the native Christians worked unremittingly at the barricades, which were now so strengthened as to be very formidable obstacles to an attack. Orders were issued that bomb-proof shelters should be formed, and that the inmates of each house should construct them for themselves. Pits were dug out to a depth of four feet; these were roofed in with timbers on which earth was piled to a depth of some feet. Many of these shelters were completed, but the ladies almost unanimously agreed that they would prefer to run the risk of shells rather than bury themselves in such holes, for the tremendous rains that came on occasionally almost flooded the ground, and, running in at the entrances to the pits, converted the floors into sheets of liquid mud.

Rex managed every day to get half an hour's chat with his cousins. They were both employed as assistants in the hospital kitchen, carrying the soups, broth, and other food to the patients, of whom there were now some thirty or forty. These, thanks to the excellent medical attention, nursing, and cooking, were almost without exception doing well, and during the whole siege there was no single death due to disease generated by foul air or septic conditions.

The girls were both cheerful and enjoyed their work. Being the assistants of the lady who superintended and for the most part carried out the cooking, they occasionally got a share of dainty dishes which were sent back untasted, and so fared better than the majority. Their work allowed them but little time for thought or anxiety, and their only fear was

that Rex might be wounded; but as they saw him coming in every day fresh and cheerful, even this fear gradually died out. His stories of the siege amused them, especially his accounts of the different ways in which different people took their misfortunes: some being always cheerful and ready to make fun of everything, while others grumbled at every petty hardship, and seemed to consider themselves as specially injured by the whole proceedings.

Rex himself had only had to fight on two or three occasions, for the barriers were all held by the marines and guards of the various Legations, while the civilians, although formed into corps, and ready in case of attack to rush to any threatened point, had so far not been called upon for service. At night, however, they took turns to keep watch at exposed positions, and during the day worked at whatever might be most required. The students were formed into a corps by themselves, and Rex acted with them. They occupied a crowded quarter, but were full of life and spirit, made light of their work, and at night formed quite a merry party.

"I am afraid you are very hard worked, Rex," Jenny said one day.

"Not a bit of it," he replied. "My hands were very much blistered the first two or three days, but they have got hard now, and my back has quite forgotten how to ache. As far as I am concerned I quite enjoy it, and I could not be living among a better set of fellows."

"I suppose you will get harder work shortly, but up to the present time there have been very few casualties."

"It is quite certain now that we have regular troops fighting against us; that is shown by their new method of attack. Instead of making an onset on one point at a time, they now assail us from all points simultaneously. The fires all took place on the same day, and that tremendous bombardment

two nights ago began all round at the same moment. That can't be the work of the Boxers."

"Then it will be more serious?"

"No, I don't know that it will be much more serious, except that no doubt they will bring up their cannon and plant them closer than they are now. But this development shows that Prince Tung's party has not got the entire control over the Empress. A proclamation has been stuck up at the tower to-day appointing several Chinese generals to the command of the Boxers. It is certain now that we have got to depend entirely upon ourselves. It is also certain that Seymour has either been annihilated or obliged to fall back. I consider it absurd to calculate that, now that the Taku Forts have fallen, an army will come up from the coast and arrive here in a few days. After the now certain failure of Seymour's expedition it is evident that a much stronger column must be employed, and such a force can hardly have been gathered yet. Then the railway, which has no doubt been destroyed between Tientsin and the sea, will have to be repaired. As we know that the cathedral at that place has been burnt, there can be no doubt that the settlement has been besieged. The Boxers there are probably in great force, and these will have to be cleared out before any attempt can be made to relieve us. I certainly should not say so to anyone else, but my own opinion is that we shall be lucky if we see the head of the relieving party before another month."

"A month! You don't mean to say that! Why, we shall all be starved out long before that!"

"It is wonderful how one can hold on if necessary," Rex said. "No doubt we shall be put upon half-allowance, and the number of mouths to be fed is tremendous, but we still keep on discovering stores in the houses and shops within

the line, and these have never been methodically searched yet. We have also got the ponies to eat. Fortunately the native Christians are not accustomed to a meat diet, so the ponies will last the Europeans a good long time. I don't know whether there are any rats in the Legations," he said with a laugh. "According to the accounts of most sieges, when the garrison were reduced to an extremity they always seem to have maintained themselves on rats. I dare say they are not bad eating if one is driven to it."

"I haven't seen any rats," Jenny said with a little shudder, "and I hope I shan't see one, either alive or cooked. I am sure I could manage very well with a little rice or flour and tea."

"I am afraid that tea would not sustain us long, but I agree with you that as long as the rice and flour hold out we can do so. We have, I believe, a pretty good stock of tinned food, sugar, tea, cocoa, and so on, and the pressure will come more upon the unfortunate coolies than upon us. It is only fair to them to say that they are working splendidly, and if we hold out it will be largely due to them, for almost all the barricade work has fallen on them. The fighting men are, of course, always on guard; the rest of us are all told off to work of some sort or other: sanitary work, the distribution of food and seeing to the wants of everyone, and, during the past two or three days, the erection of shell-proof shelters. The hard work falls to the Chinese. They are wonderfully patient, obedient, and hard-working, and expose themselves fearlessly everywhere. I am coming to have great respect for them. There is no giving way at all among them. They have lost everything they have in the world, but they show no signs of despondency. They take everything that comes as a matter of course, and sometimes, when I go among them when the fire is heavy, I hear them praying out aloud. Well, I must be off again."

CHAPTER VIII

A PERILOUS ADVENTURE

AS he went along Rex saw a Chinaman sitting down, weeping bitterly.

"Hillo!" he said, "what is the matter with you?"

The man stood up.

"I only got in at twilight this morning, sir," he said. "I came in by the north bridge. I managed to make my way there and lay down underneath it. Just as it was getting light I made a run to come in. Many shots were fired at me, but I was not hit."

"Then what are you crying about?"

"I am crying, sir, for those I left behind me. There were twelve of us altogether, and we had been lying hidden since the people first rose. We were in a cellar. The house was burnt over us, but the cellars were in the back-yard, and though the houses were destroyed, and we were nearly smothered, we managed to live through it. A part of a wall fell across the entrance, and that saved us. There was some food stored in the cellar and we have lived upon it up to now, but it was nearly all gone when I left. We have known nothing that was passing outside. Yesterday we cleared away some of the bricks and I crawled out. We could hear the firing going on continuously, and knew that the people in the Legations must be fighting the Boxers, and it was agreed that I should try to make my way here

and ask them to send out a rescue party. Now I find that the Legations are so surrounded, and attacked so fiercely, that it is impossible for them to save my comrades. I have been speaking to one of your chief officers, and he tells me that it is quite impossible for them to do so, and all my friends must perish. I have an old father and mother there, and a wife, and three sisters, and the rest are all friends."

"How far are they away?"

"More than a mile, sir."

"I will think it over," Rex said. "I am afraid nothing can be done, but I will see. If you are here at seven o'clock this evening I will tell you."

As usual Ah Lo was not far off, and Rex went to him and told him what he had heard.

"It is bad," Ah Lo said, "but what can be done, master? Many have been massacred; it is but twelve more."

"Yes, but we could do nothing for the others. Indeed, most of them were massacred before we got in here. I mean to save these people if I can."

"But how can it be done, master?"

"That is what I am thinking about, and I want you to think too, Ah Lo."

"I am ready to die with you, master; and if you tell me to, I will try to get out and do all I can for these people, if you will but remain here."

"No, Ah Lo, that I cannot hear of. You know we have done well together before, and it must be easier to get people out of a cellar than it was out of a governor's yamen."

"It might not be so difficult to get them out, master; the question is how to get them away."

"I quite see that."

"Of course they are Christians, and people can know Christians directly by their dress and other things, though it

is not so much by the dress as by something in their manner. Everyone can tell a Christian."

"Well I must say I don't see anything different between the people working here and those we meet everywhere else. I will take your word for it, however, and if there is anything different they must do their best to change it. It seems to me that if we get them out we must hide them in some empty house, near one of the gates if possible, so that it will be handy for the wall. There are not likely to be guards on the wall at the other side of the town, and we might at night get them up there and lower them into the ditch; I believe at most places there is no water in it. Then we must get them round this side and haul them up that part of the wall we hold, and where we could, of course, make our way out."

"It doesn't seem to me that there is anything very difficult about it," said Ah Lo. "Of course we should put on Boxer clothes. The other day we got hold of lots of the cord they wear. Several Boxers have fallen near the north bridge, and lie there still; so we can take their coats. We can carry swords and pistols, but no rifles. If we should be discovered, the swords, of course, would be no good; we only want them to make us look like Boxers. Well, I don't see why we shouldn't be able to do it. Of course there is some risk in it, but if we could manage in the way you say, it ought not to be very great. Of course we must take with us the man who brought the news in, to show us the place, and we may as well get a Boxer coat and sword for him too. In fact if we can get half a dozen we will take them; the more we can dress as Boxers the better."

Rex went to his room and wrote some letters, which he gave to Sandwich when they met at six o'clock.

"Look here, Sandwich," he said, "I want you to take care of these letters. I have heard of a party who are shut up in

a cellar in the city. There are twelve of them, I believe, and they have exhausted their provisions, and must come out if not relieved in the course of a day or so. I mean to go out and try to bring them in here."

"Eh? what? are you out of your mind, Bateman?"

"No, I don't think there is much risk in it. I shall get the Americans to let me down over the part of the wall they hold, and of course I myself and Ah Lo, who will go with me, will dress in Boxer clothes. I shall go round the wall and get in again by one of the gates at the other end. I don't suppose any guard will be posted there. At any rate if there is a guard they won't interfere with me. Then I shall go and get these people out, and shall either let them down over the wall at once, or hide them till to-morrow night in some empty house close to it; all will depend on the time. It really seems a very simple thing."

"It may seem a very simple thing, Bateman, but it strikes me as being a mightily dangerous one. Still, if I spoke Chinese as you do, I would volunteer to go with you."

"It would be of no advantage, Sandwich. If we are detected it will make no difference whether there are twelve of us or a hundred and twenty; we should certainly be killed. It is simply a question of being found out, and therefore the fewer of us there are the better. Of course if only a solitary man detected us, we should cut him down without any hesitation, but at that time of night it is not likely that there will be anyone about to see us. They are so busy all day that I fancy all who are not engaged in worrying us at night would be glad enough to sleep. A good many dead Boxers are lying near the north gate, and I was thinking of sending my man to get the clothes of some of them. Now I think of it I remember that the Americans and Germans, when they captured the wall yesterday, threw the bodies of the men that

they had killed over the parapet into the moat, so we can get the things when we go out, without running any risk.

"I should not have said anything about this to you, only I have written letters to my cousins and my father and mother, so that you can hand the one to the girls in two or three days if I do not get back, and send the other down to my father after you are relieved. I do it as a measure of precaution, but I really do not think that there is any great chance of my coming to grief. Of course if the worst comes to the worst, and we are surprised, I shall bolt for it with Ah Lo. I am ready to run some risk to get these poor people out, but I don't mean to throw away my life, and, as I say, shall make a bolt for it if we are found out. In those deserted streets, with no end of empty houses, I fancy we could soon throw them off our scent, and should then be able to find our way back again quietly to the foot of the walls."

"Well, I hope you will do so, Bateman. I tell you fairly that I think you are running a very foolish risk. Still, it is a noble thing to attempt."

"Oh, bosh!" said Rex, "it seems to me a very simple affair, and it is certainly well worth running certain risks to save the lives of those poor people."

"When do you start?"

"As soon as it gets dark enough for us to move along near the wall without being seen. I want to go as soon as I can, because I should like to pass out through the gate of the China town before my doing so would excite any attention. I don't think it is likely that they will have guards there. If we find that there are, and I see that they are watchful, I will hide up till the morning, when people are sure to go out to cultivate the fields."

Rex now found Ah Lo and told him that he need not go

out to get the Boxer clothes as there were plenty to be had in the moat outside the wall.

"That will certainly be better, master."

As it was getting dusk they started with the Chinaman who had brought in the report, made their way through the Russian Legation into the American, then climbed the wall. Rex was well known to the officer who commanded the party there.

"Good-evening, Mr. Bateman!" the officer said, "have you any message for us?"

"No, I am going out on my own account. This Chinaman with me is one of a party who have been hidden in a cellar since the massacre. They knew nothing of what had been going on, and he came to ask if a party would go out to their assistance. That, of course, is impossible, but it seems to me that there will be no difficulty in me and my man managing it. We have got ropes for letting ourselves down from the wall here, and at the other side of the town, where the fugitives are hidden. I hope to arrive at the foot of the wall here not later than to-morrow night."

"It seems a very wild scheme, Bateman."

"I don't think so. When we get down to the wall we are going to dress up in the clothes of those Boxers you threw over after your recent fight, and I shall take four or five extra suits for the use of the fugitives. In that way we are likely to pass along without being questioned. The streets will probably be nearly deserted by eleven or twelve o'clock, and if we have luck we shall be able to get them over the wall without much loss of time. If there is no guard at the gate of the China wall we may possibly be here before daylight to-morrow morning."

"Well, I wish you luck, but I can't help thinking that you are acting very rashly."

"You must remember that I and my man have already travelled some hundred miles in disguise, and by this means have already got in here twice, and out of Tientsin once. I really don't see that there is any appreciable risk in the thing whatever. If it is after daylight when we arrive here, you and your men will be able to keep the people in the Chinese town from attacking us while we are coming up."

"I think we can promise to do that," the officer said; "we never see a soul pass along this road."

"Very well, we shall be here in an hour's time."

Rex went to the storekeeper and obtained from him a length of rope sufficient for climbing the wall, and then with Ah Lo and the Chinaman he set out. It was dark when they got to the wall again, and they were without delay lowered down one after the other by the American marines.

"We shall keep a sharp look-out for you towards morning," the officer said; "do you want to take this rope away with you?"

"No, I have another length with me."

Their first step was to strip the garments from nine of the dead Boxers. Three of these they put on, and the rest they fastened in a bundle, which the Chinaman took. For a quarter of a mile they followed the road by the moat, and then turned into the town. They saw but few lights, and went without attracting any observation through the gate. As Rex had expected, this was unguarded. They crossed the moat beyond it, and then walked on quickly. An hour's brisk walking took them to the gate in the Tartar wall. This was open and they passed through unquestioned. Then they dived into a lane, and in a quarter of an hour reached a space covered with ruins. Through these the Chinaman led the way, and presently stopped by the side of a fallen wall.

"This is the place," he said, and, advancing, he cleared

away some bricks, and suddenly disappeared into the bowels of the earth.

"It is I," he said, "and a white officer and his servant have come out to rescue you."

An exclamation of thankfulness followed his words, and Rex descended with Ah Lo at his heels. Striking a light, he saw seven men and five women. The people gave a cry of terror as they saw the Boxer garments.

"Do not be afraid," Rex said, "these are only disguises. We have brought some more with us, which the men must put on."

He struck match after match while this was being done.

"Now," he said, "you women must make some little changes in your dress, so as to resemble ordinary native women, and then we will sally out."

Five minutes later they started. They had gone but fifty yards beyond the burnt area when three men came from a house and accosted them.

"Who are you?" they said.

"We are your brethren," Ah Lo answered.

"Give us the sign, that we may know you are Boxers," one of the men said.

"Give us the sign," Ah Lo replied.

"We called for it first," the man said.

"Very well, this is the only sign that you will get from us," and Ah Lo struck him a tremendous blow with his sword.

Rex cut down another, and the third took to his heels, shouting.

"This way," the Chinaman said, running down a narrow alley. "We can get out at the other end, where there is a net-work of lanes."

They hurried at full speed down the lane, then turned

again, and in five minutes were a quarter of a mile from the scene of the fray.

"Now," Rex said, "let us make for the wall. That man may have given the alarm, and it will not be safe to try the gate."

They kept on until the wall rose before them, then they followed it till they came to steps leading to the top. When they reached the summit, Ah Lo unwound a rope from his waist.

"Now," he said to one of the men, "you go down first. If you find that the water is too deep to wade across, stop where you are."

One by one the men and women were lowered down by Ah Lo, and Rex was the last to descend. Just as he reached the water, steps were heard running along the wall.

"Keep quiet," Rex said, "let them go by before we try to cross. They won't notice the rope in the dark."

Some fifty men ran along the top of the wall, leaving one here and there to watch. One was halted immediately above Rex and his companions.

"Now," Rex asked in a whisper, "how many of you can swim?"

Three of the men said they could do so.

"Very well," said Rex, "we must carry across those who cannot; the women first. Swim as noiselessly as you can; that fellow above will hear the least noise."

The first party crossed without noise, but as the second lot were being taken over one of the Chinamen made a splash. There was an immediate shout from above, and a man leaning over the parapet fired a musket. The swimmers and their burdens, however, reached the other side of the moat without mishap.

"It will be five minutes before they gather again here,"

THEY WERE LOWERED DOWN ONE AFTER THE OTHER.

said Rex, "and then they will have to get to the gate, which must take them nearly ten minutes. Let us get well out into the country, and then make for the China town. Let each man help a woman along."

Fortunately all the women had, on becoming Christians, given up the absurd practice of deforming their feet, and were now able to walk with comparative freedom. Nevertheless, they would have made but slow progress but for the assistance of the men. After a time they changed their course, but, hearing a number of men running and shouting, they took refuge in some high grain until they had passed. When their pursuers were well out of sight and hearing, they continued till they reached the gate in the Chinese wall. Here they waited for a quarter of an hour, and then Ah Lo approached the gate.

"I see no guard has been placed here since we passed out, so we can enter without fear."

Passing through, they turned at once to the right, and kept without interruption along the bank of the canal at the foot of the Tartar wall. The women were, for the most part, drooping now. They had been on short rations for many days, and were no doubt worn out by anxiety and terror. Progress, therefore, became much slower and more difficult, but luckily there was no further alarm, and before dawn they succeeded in reaching that part of the wall held by the Americans.

"We are here, Captain," Rex called. "We have got them all. Please let down the rope and haul them up."

"Bravo!" the officer said. "I hardly expected to see you again. We will soon have them all up."

Half a minute later the rope fell beside them, and one by one the women were hoisted to the top of the wall. The men were next taken up, and finally Ah Lo and Rex.

"So you got through safely," the officer said, shaking Rex by the hand. "Did you meet with any trouble?"

"We were only stopped by three Boxers, and as we could not give their pass-word they tried to arrest us. My man cut down one, and I polished off another, but the third bolted and gave the alarm. We had no difficulty, however, in eluding them, and making our way to the wall. The fellows came along above us, and, as we had to carry the women over the moat, they heard us. But we got well away before they could come out through the gate, and we hid up till they had passed us in the dark. We had no difficulty in coming through the Chinese town."

"Well, I congratulate you upon your exploit, which has been the means of saving twelve of these poor beggars."

"Now I shall be going on at once," Rex said. "We are all drenched to the skin, and though we have dried a bit on the way, I for one shall be glad to get into fresh clothes. I will thank you to give me those I left here before starting. I must put them on now, otherwise I should never get through the Russian Legation."

He rapidly changed his clothes, and then they went with his companions down the steps from the wall, passed through the American Legation, and entered that of the Russians. Here the sentry stopped Rex, and refused to let him pass until an officer came out with a lantern and questioned him. This officer, however, recognized Rex at once, and allowed him and his party to proceed. Rex then went on through the houses that separated the Legation from the British quarters. Here they were again questioned by two marines, but having satisfied these men, they entered the British Legation.

"Now you are safe," Rex said to his friends. "You must

lie down and sleep here to-night. To-morrow I will see that you have clothes and rations."

The Chinese had scarcely spoken a word since they started, but now, as with one accord, they fell on their knees and showered blessings and thanks upon Rex for saving them from a terrible death.

"It is all right," he said. "I am very pleased to have been the means of saving you and myself. Thank God that I have been able to do so! I had expected to meet with many difficulties, but everything has turned out well. Now I must go, but I will see that you get an allowance of food in the morning."

Then he went over to his quarters. Sandwich and two or three of his companions were still sitting up, and they gave a shout of satisfaction as they saw Rex enter.

"I am heartily glad to see you back, Bateman," one of them said. "You found it, of course, impossible, and have had to give it up. I felt sure that you would have to do so, and we waited up to see you."

"What time is it now?" asked Rex.

"About one o'clock."

"Well, I am back sooner than I expected, and am happy to say that I have succeeded without any difficulty. On the way back with the refugees we had one encounter, and had to kill a couple of Boxers. The rest was easy."

"You don't say so, Bateman! Well, I congratulate you most heartily. You have indeed done a good night's work; tell us all about it."

Rex gave them a short account of his adventure.

"I thought," he said, "that there would be no great difficulty about it, and I am sorry that it was not accomplished without bloodshed, but we could not help ourselves in that respect. I am glad indeed that I brought the poor creatures

in. The women were desperately done up by the time we got within the lines, which is not to be wondered at after all they had gone through. Well, I will lie down now, for I have had a very long day, and I must be up early to-morrow to see that these people get rations, for I fancy they are pretty nearly starved."

In a few minutes all were asleep. Rex was up before six o'clock in the morning, and at once ran down to the gentleman whose duty it was to see to the provisioning of the native Christians.

"I want you to put down thirteen more names," he said.

"How is that, Mr. Bateman?"

"One of a party came in yesterday afternoon, and told me that there were twelve of them in hiding in a cellar near the burnt area, so I went out with my man last night and brought them in."

"You did, Mr. Bateman? You astonish me! And you did it without opposition?"

"Without any opposition to speak of, sir. We had to kill a couple of Boxers, and we were pursued hotly. After we got over the wall one of the men made a splash in the water, and the sentry heard it. But, with those two slight exceptions, everything went off well."

"But how on earth did you get in here?"

"We got over the wall close by the Americans, and were hauled up by them on our return."

"Well, sir, you must at once report what you have done."

"Oh, I would rather say nothing about it at all!" Rex said. "I shall only be questioned about it, and have all sorts of bother."

"Nevertheless it must be reported, Mr. Bateman. I shall have to account for the issue of thirteen more rations than

before, and shall have to explain in my report that these are people who were brought in by you during the night."

"Well, I only hope that nobody will take the trouble to read your report, sir. I hate being talked about, and as likely as not I should be blown up for going out without orders."

"Perhaps something will be said about that, Mr. Bateman, but certainly you will get more praise than blame."

Rex shrugged his shoulders.

"I would much rather get neither, sir. The affair was a very simple and straightforward one, and there is no occasion that I can see for anything to be said about it one way or another."

Nevertheless, to his disgust, he saw, an hour later, a notice stuck up among those in the tower, that Mr. Bateman, with his man, had gone out and succeeded in bringing in thirteen native Christians from a hiding-place among the ruins.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE ENEMY'S CAMP

AS Rex was returning to breakfast in a state of exceeding bad temper, he met Sandwich, who said: "Sir Claude's secretary has been round. He wishes to see you."

Rex swung himself round with a grunt of dissatisfaction, and made his way to the residency. Sir Claude, with four other gentlemen, had just sat down to breakfast when he was shown in.

"Have you breakfasted, Mr. Bateman?" he asked.

"No, sir, not yet."

"Sit down and take it with me, then; we can talk while we eat."

Rex would much rather have gone through his examination and made off to breakfast with his chum, but as he could not refuse the invitation, he sat down in no very good temper. Sir Claude smiled a little.

"I can understand," he said after a minute or two, "by what you said last time I had a conversation with you, that you don't like having your good deeds talked about."

"I don't like being talked about in any way, sir."

"But in that case, Mr. Bateman, you should not do things that necessitate your being talked about."

Rex, after a little struggle to maintain his serious face, laughed.

"Well, sir, I can assure you that if I had my own way I

should prefer to go about and do what I like and to keep it entirely to myself."

"Well, now, you see, the thing has come out, Mr. Bateman, certainly not from what you said about it, but from the report made by Mr. Graham, when you applied to him for thirteen Chinamen to be put on rations. I have just been telling these gentlemen of the manner in which you rescued your cousins, and they, as well as myself, want to hear this second chapter of adventure. Please tell us all about it."

"There is very little to tell, sir."

"Excuse me, Mr. Bateman, there must be a good deal to tell, and as you must be perfectly well aware that you ought not to have left the Legation without permission, the least you can do is to give us a full account of your reasons for doing so, and of the manner in which you carried out your adventure. Now, please, begin at the beginning and tell us how you learned that the people were in hiding."

Beginning, therefore, with his meeting with the Chinaman, Rex told the story, ending with: "There, sir, I said at the beginning that there was really nothing to tell, and that it was the simplest thing in the world."

"I do not quite agree with you, Mr. Bateman. I think my friends here will all join with me in saying that it was an admirably planned and well carried out scheme, and it cannot, I am sure, be otherwise than a matter of intense gratification to yourself that you have saved these twelve poor people from a terrible death. It does you very great credit, sir, but I hope that you will not undertake any more enterprises of this kind without speaking to me beforehand. I am commander-in-chief of the forces here, and before any of my officers undertake enterprises that might deprive me of their services they must have my consent."

As soon as the meal was over, Rex ran back to his quarters.

"Is there anything left to eat, Sandwich?" he asked.

"Yes, we put some by for you."

"That is a comfort. The governor asked me to breakfast with him, and I had scarcely got down two or three mouthfuls when he asked me to tell him all about that affair last night, and as a fellow cannot talk and eat at once, I fared very badly. What have you got?"

"There is half a pot of jam and boiled rice."

"That will do first-rate. Where are you going to work to-day?"

"We are going over to the Fu, and are just starting."

"Well, I will come across when I am done, and so get out of the way of being jawed at. I suppose we shan't come back till dusk. That will suit me admirably, for there is sure to be something else fresh during the day, and by to-morrow this business of mine will be forgotten."

On the way down to the Fu Rex was captured by a party on the search for volunteers to drive a hole through the south walls, in order that a watch could be placed there to see that the Chinese were not mining in that direction. The day was tremendously hot, and as the wall was well built the labour was extremely exhausting. It was therefore a relief when they were called off to take any measures that might be necessary at the stable-house. The Chinese had mounted a gun at the barricade on their side of the Mongol Market and opened fire on the stable-house. Four shells crashed, one after another, into the stable-house, and the marines had to evacuate the upper story, and the whole building was so damaged that it was in danger of falling. Several shells also burst over the hospital. One entered it, and another killed a pony just outside it. The marines kept up a steady musketry fire on the Chinese who were working the gun, and soon managed to drive them off. In the evening the gun

again began firing, this time aiming at the door of the stable-yard. As, however, the newly-built wall behind it was ten feet thick they effected no serious damage, and the next morning the gun was removed; and it was not again brought into play.

This cessation of fire was singular, as, though it had failed to breach the wall behind the door, it could certainly have destroyed with a few shot the old wall beside the door. Half a dozen guns placed here would have brought the whole wall down in a very short time and laid our defences open. All sorts of explanations were suggested, but the general idea was that the Chinese officer commanding at that point must have been secretly in favour of the defenders of the Legation, and anxious that total destruction should not be effected, either because he was favourable to the Christian doctrine or feared the vengeance that would follow by the united powers of Europe.

While the fire on the stable-house was continuing, a strong attack had been directed against the barricades of the French Legation. The Chinese lines had been pushed up so close that the fighting was almost hand to hand. M. von Rosthorn, the Austrians' chargé d'affaires, was fighting here, with his brave wife, a lady who had taken more than her share in the defence. She endeavoured to destroy the Chinese barrier by throwing upon it straw dipped in petroleum. The Chinese retorted with showers of stones, by one of which M. Rosthorn was somewhat severely wounded. Throughout the siege this lady evinced an amount of courage that was the astonishment of the troops. When Rex went back in the evening from the Fu he looked into the hospital to see the girls. They ran up to him eagerly, crying breathlessly: "Oh, Rex, everyone is talking about your going out and bringing in a party of men and women!"

"Well, then, I wish to goodness they would find something better to talk about. There is nothing in the thing at all. A Chinaman who had come in told me that the party was in hiding, and guided Ah Lo and me to the place. Of course they were glad enough to come out, and we had no adventure at all on the way, except that three Boxers came up and interfered with us, and we had to cut two of them down. The other bolted, and we then got over the wall, made a circuit through the fields, and climbed back over the wall behind the American Legation. I am quite sick of hearing about it, as if there was nothing else to talk about. It is quite ridiculous."

"Well, people must have thought it was something out of the way, because a notice about it was posted up on the tower early in the morning, and another report that Sir Claude was praising your action very much. Lots of people have come in to tell us about it."

"It is a pity they hadn't something better to do," Rex grumbled. "I am quite sick of the subject; let us talk about something else."

"This is the first time I have seen you cross, Rex," said Jenny.

"Well, it is enough to make one cross, having such a fuss made about nothing. Now, how are you getting on here?"

"We are all right, though some shells burst over the house this afternoon, which made us fairly jump."

"Yes, I know; they gave us quite a start, but we could see that no great harm had been done."

"The heat has been awful; we have knocked out all the panes of the upper windows to try and get a little air in, but we have all been feeling it very much, and of course you must have felt it more. I really don't know how we should get on

if we were not allowed off duty for two hours each evening, when we can go out and enjoy the cool air."

"Yes, it must be terribly trying," Rex said. "It must be worse for you in that stifling room inside than it is for us, even working in the sun."

That night a small party of marines and volunteers went out and endeavoured to capture the gun on the other side of the market-place, but the Chinese stood firm, and they were obliged to retire without having effected anything. They were very well satisfied in the morning, however, when they found that the gun had been removed during the night.

The next day, the last of June, the fight raged round the French Legation, and although all men, not otherwise employed, who could use a rifle went to the assistance of its defenders, things went badly. A considerable portion of the Legation was burned, and the defenders were driven back step by step; but when the Chinese were distinctly getting the best of it their fire ceased, without any apparent reason, and the wearied defenders and the Chinese coolies had time to put up fresh barricades.

At nine o'clock a very heavy thunderstorm burst over the city, and at the same time firing was renewed with fresh vigour. Cannon, machine-guns, and rifles added their roar to the rumble of the thunder, and their puny flashes to the vivid sheets of lightning. The firing ceased by daylight, and the day passed without any serious disturbance. The next day, however, began badly. The Chinese concentrated their attempts against the German and American barricades on the wall; they had advanced their works to within a hundred yards of the Germans and mounted a gun there, from which they maintained a constant fire. It was difficult to send up reinforcements, for there was no shelter between the Legations and the foot of the wall, and several were killed as they

tried to cross. The American barricade on the west was very open, as the Chinese guns at the Chien Mên gates commanded it. On the night of the 30th of June the enemy threw up a new barricade within two feet of the American one.

On the 2nd of July, at daybreak, the Chinese stormed the German barricade and drove its defenders from the wall. The Americans, seeing their own rear open to attack, hurriedly left the defence and ran down to their Legation. This was a grievous misfortune. The Ministers all met at the British Legation, and decided that the wall must be retaken at whatever cost, as the Chinese were placing guns upon it that would sweep the whole position. No time was lost. A body of marines, Americans, British, and Russians, were collected, and, led by Colonel Myers, dashed boldly forward and drove the Chinese back along the wall. The enemy had taken no steps whatever to strengthen their position, or even to mass any body of troops capable of holding it against a determined attack. The moment the position was regained everyone who could work a sewing-machine or a needle was called upon to make sand-bags. Every sort of stuff was called into requisition for the purpose; ladies cut up silk and cotton dresses, men contributed spare pairs of trousers—which only required sewing up at the bottom of the legs and again at the top after being filled. With these the barricades were strengthened. Nevertheless, although the position was re-established, a general feeling of depression was felt. The Germans had not worked well, their resistance to the attack had been feeble, and none of their marines had joined in recovering the wall.

The feeling was deepened by events at the French Legation. Here Mr. Wagner, an officer of the customs-house, was killed and the French guards were driven back.

Later, however, they recovered the position and returned to their barricades.

In the afternoon there was another misfortune. An Italian officer, Captain Paolina, proposed to attempt the capture of a gun in the northeast, facing the Fu, which had caused considerable annoyance. He suggested that the Japanese should proceed along the side of the canal, and then, working round a large block of houses, come down upon the gun from the north, while he, with a mixed party, should make his way between two of the blocks of houses against which the gun was directed. His own party of Italians was a small one, but they were supported by a few Italian marines and some Austrian and British volunteers. Among the latter were the students of the Consular College.

"It seems to be rather a hare-brained scheme," Sandwich said. "I do not know whether this Italian officer has any particular means of finding out the lie of the land, but we certainly seem going at it in rather a headlong way, and without taking any precautions whatever. However, as we have not been called upon for much work, it is our turn for a fight. I suppose you are coming, Bateman?"

"Of course I am. I regard myself as a consular student at present, and am certainly game to take part in whatever is going on, though, as you say, it seems wiser to gather in the part of the Fu that remains in our hands, and go straight from that to the gun."

They started along the side of the canal. When the Japanese had gone on ahead, the rest of the force rushed up the little lane at the corner of the Fu. Here they found themselves suddenly face to face with a barricade, eight feet high and loopholed. It was impossible to assault it. The Italians, who were ahead, made a mad rush for the hole leading into the wall to the Fu. They almost fought their way in, for it

was but wide enough for one man to pass at a time. The officer was wounded, and two of the marines were killed. While the struggle was going on, the volunteers stood with their backs against a wall which was a little out of the general line of fire, and when the Italians were out of the way they made a dash for the door, one by one. The first four got across in safety, but the last was hit in the shoulder and leg. The Japanese, meanwhile, had forced their way some distance north, but after having one man killed and two wounded, finding themselves unsupported, they fell back.

The failure of the affair excited much indignation in the Legation. It had been attempted without any knowledge of the ground, without any pains being taken to ascertain the enemy's position, and in a hasty and haphazard manner. Their success, however, gave great encouragement to the enemy.

The next day the Chinese gun again opened fire against the Fu, and under its cover a furious attack was made on the building. The Japanese, who had already suffered heavily, were forced back, fighting stoutly; and they must have been driven out of the building had it not been for a company of Christian Chinese whom their colonel had assiduously drilled, and who now fought as bravely as the Japanese themselves. With their aid the Japs recovered their lost ground by the end of the day.

The Chinese had shown particular animosity towards this company of converts, hurling curses against them and hitting them with stones. This was the result of an imperial proclamation which had been issued on the previous day, ordering that all missionaries and converts who did not repent of their former error should be slain.

The position at the American barricade was becoming more and more dangerous. The Chinese attack had increased in

vigour, and they had built another barricade diagonally across the bastion, and almost touching that of the Americans. The consequence was that they could at any moment from their barricade pour into the bastion, and then make a rush over the American barrier. It was evident that if they were not driven out the wall must be abandoned. At daybreak, therefore, the Americans, strengthened by a reinforcement of British and Russians, gathered noiselessly behind their barricade, and, with the first gleam of light, dashed over it. They found most of the Chinese behind the new barricade asleep, and bayoneting them, drove the enemy also from the barrier on the other side of the wall. The Chinamen rallied, however, behind a barricade farther along the wall, and again opened fire, killing two of the American marines, and wounding Corporal Gregory of the British marines, and Colonel Myers, who had all along been in command. This was a serious loss to the defence.

By this time life in the British Legation had become smooth and regular, with the exception that a number of Chinese men and women, for whom no houseroom could be found, had to be accommodated in rude shelters in the square in front of the British envoy's house. All were settled down, and every crevice through which a musket-ball could enter had been closed up. The chapel had been divided into compartments, and some fifty people were lodged in it. The library had been thrown open to the use of all within the Legation. The wells were fortunately full, and the health of the whole company was excellent.

Communication was opened with the Fu, as a sloping passage had been driven down into the canal and a strong barrier erected at the lower end, so that it was possible to pass along it without risk of suffering from the fire kept up from the north bridge.

From another quarter, however, the enemy were giving a great deal of trouble. Owing to the burning of the museum the space between our outposts and the Imperial wall was clear. The Chinese had now built behind that wall a strong platform and mounted several cannon upon it, only one of which, however, was of foreign make. The parapet of the wall, heightened and loopholed, served as a breastwork, and as they put an iron shutter before the larger gun, they could with perfect safety bombard the Legation below, only three hundred yards away. The besieged could make no reply to the fire. The wall itself could not be breached unless by heavy cannon, and had the Chinese placed upon the wall some of the modern cannon, of which they had abundance, and added to their number, they could easily have destroyed all the Legations. But, strange to say, they contented themselves with only firing an occasional shot, which did a certain amount of damage no doubt, but nothing serious.

Why the Boxers should not have utilized this commanding position is a mystery, and as inexplicable as their failure to use the gun on the opposite side of the market. This question was, too, a fertile cause of argument. In many respects the Chinese showed a good deal of intelligence in their attacks, and it was simply astounding that they should almost entirely neglect two points from which they could have done us more harm than from all others together. Some asserted that it must be due to officers in Ching's force, men who, like himself, absolutely disapproved of the attack upon the Legations. But whatever the reason, all agreed that had the enemy utilized these two positions, the defence of the Legations must sooner or later have broken down.

"They are a curious mixture," Sandwich said. "Sometimes they seem to fight very pluckily, and then when they

have really got the best of it they seem to hesitate in an unaccountable manner. Twice, you see, it has really been open to them, if they had made a push, to take possession of the American and German Legations and they might also have captured the French; then all of a sudden their attack ceased without any apparent reason. Again, when they had captured the walls, which really placed us almost at their mercy, they let themselves be driven off by less than a hundred men. Considering the force that they have at their disposal, they ought to have repulsed the attack with ease. Then they did actually repel our attack on the other side of the market, but the moment they had done so they withdrew the gun and ceased to harass us. They have any number of guns at their disposal, and might have planted a score of them there, in which case they could have battered down the whole length of our wall on that side in a few hours. Now they have stuck those guns up there and play right down into the residency, yet they leave unworked the one formidable piece they have at that point."

"It almost looks, Sandwich, as if they were divided into two parties, one using some sort of activity in order to take the place, the other thwarting them at every turn. That is the only explanation I can think of. It is a pity that one can't get at some of the leaders. I don't mean, of course, that Prince Tung could be bribed, but there must be some smaller princes and mandarins who would be amenable to a handsome offer, and who would go round to the side of Prince Ching, who we do know is dead against the Tung party. The best plan, though I don't for a moment suggest that it is possible, would be to kidnap the Empress, and bring her in here in a sedan-chair."

Sandwich laughed.

"That certainly would be a grand move, but, short of the

power of making invisible the Empress, the chair, and its bearers, I am afraid there is no way of doing it."

"No, I am afraid not. Certainly it could only be done by someone who knows the palace and its ways perfectly. We may take it for granted that all the approaches are guarded, and that it would be absolutely impossible for anyone who is not perfectly familiar with the place to make his way in. That is the difficulty. I suppose that if a man could once make an entrance and hide up, he would be able to get at the Empress. She must be alone sometimes, and if he could get at her at such a time and put a pistol to her head, he might be able to get her out. I don't suppose she would be less amenable to persuasion of that sort than other women."

Sandwich burst into a fit of laughter.

"You are a curious fellow, Bateman. I do believe you would be mad enough to try it if you could see the slightest possibility of success."

Rex joined in the laugh.

"I am not sure that I wouldn't. It would be well worth risking one's life to save the occupants of these Legations, but I confess I do not see a possibility of carrying out the idea, at any rate without the assistance of someone who knows every in and out of the place, where the guards are placed, what are the habits of the Empress, how she occupies every minute of the day, and all that sort of thing. If a man had learnt all that, and had got such a guide, I should say that it would be possible. In case of failure, however, he would have to be prepared to put an end to himself, so as to avoid a very much more unpleasant form of death. But it is useless to think of it, as I have no idea whatever of the geography of the forbidden city, or the routine of life there. It is a pity, for it would really be worth trying."

"It is a pity," Sandwich laughed. "Can't you suggest any

other plan? For instance we might make a balloon, anchor it over the palace, and keep up a rain of Greek fire till we have destroyed the palace and all it occupants."

"I am afraid that could not be done," Rex said, "there are many reasons against it, but it is a thousand pities that we have not a good stock of iron here and a smelting-furnace."

"What would you do with that?"

"Well we might make a big mortar, say a two-foot mortar; it would not need to be very strong, because a small charge of powder would be sufficient for our purpose. If we could but drop a half a dozen shells into the Imperial Palace, I should think the Empress would be inclined to come to terms speedily if she did not want the palace and all its contents burned."

"That is a more feasible idea than the last," Sandwich said gravely; "but, as you say, we haven't got iron or a smelting-furnace, nor powder, nor skill. If we had all these things we might manage it. Try again, old man. If you keep on inventing things you may hit upon something good some day or other."

"My opinion is," Rex said sturdily, "that where there is a will there is a way. I have no doubt that when a certain ingenious fellow suggested making a wooden horse to capture Troy he was tremendously chaffed at first, but nevertheless you see he succeeded."

"So he did, Rex, therefore clearly there is a chance for you."

"I am afraid not," Rex said, shaking his head gravely.

"Well, I would go on thinking, Bateman, if I were you. For myself I own that I see no way at all, but I do think that you would be more likely to invent a way than anyone else, considering the manner in which you rescued your cousins from the Boxers, and your success in getting in and

out of this place, to say nothing of the convoying of those native Christians into the Legation. I believe that if a plan could be hit upon, you would be the fellow to do it, and to carry it out; but I am afraid that this is beyond you."

"I am afraid so; still, I shall keep on thinking the matter over. I am a great believer in the saying that where there is a will there is a way."

The next morning there was quite a stir. The Chinese had discovered an old iron cannon in one of the shops of Legation Street. It was an old Chinese gun, and it was a question whether it could be fired without bursting. The Russians had brought up some shell with them, but no gun, and after cleaning out the gun, they found that these shell would fit it moderately well. With some trouble the gun was mounted on the wheels of a hand carriage. Some of the charge was then removed from one of the Russian shells, and, the onlookers having retired to a safe distance, it was pushed home and fired. The result was grand; the gun turned over and over, the wheels went into fragments, but as the spectators ran up, a cheer broke from them, for they found that, contrary to all expectations, the gun had not burst. The one-pounder Italian gun was then brought up, and the Chinese gun mounted upon it. This suggested the happy idea of utilizing the Italian gun, which was without shell. A quantity of leaden candlesticks was therefore brought in by the coolies, melted down, and cast into shot, and thus the Legation received the addition of two guns to its armament. Both proved very useful. They were brought up to assist in the defence of any point seriously threatened, and evidently created a considerable impression upon the assailants.

On Sunday, July 8th, the Chinese made a heavier attack than usual. The British and French Legations and the Fu were all subject to this attack. On the spot from which they

had set fire to the buildings behind the Chinese secretary's house the enemy now planted a gun, and proceeded to shell the house and the fort on its roof. This did considerable damage, and caused much excitement, but after firing for some time they stopped in the same unaccountable way as they had done at other points. The defenders had begun to make a slide for the purpose of hauling their new gun up to the roof, but this was abandoned as soon as the Chinese fire ceased, as the gun was urgently wanted to aid the Japanese to repel a serious attack upon the Fu.

The attack there was a very sharp one, the Chinese keeping up a heavy fire of shell, and setting some more of the buildings in flames. The Japs, however, were in the end successful in driving the enemy off. The defenders of the French Legation were very hardly pressed for a time, but the attack was finally repulsed. At this point the Austrian captain, who had a fortnight before ordered the troops out of the Russian, French, German, and American Legations, was killed fighting bravely. The Germans and Americans had also to fight hard to repel the attacks made upon them.

Rex always looked forward greatly to his hour's chat with the girls every evening. He had, early in the siege, introduced Sandwich and three or four of the other consular students to them, and one or more of these generally accompanied him on his visits, so that they made quite a merry party, as there were generally many amusing incidents of the day to be related. As a rule, however, they chatted upon general topics—life in Tientsin, the prospects of relief, and other matters. Sandwich had caused great amusement, the evening after he and Rex had discussed the latter's projects, by gravely detailing them to the girls, who, however, at first seemed a little alarmed lest Rex should endeavour to carry them into effect.

"You need not be afraid, girls," Rex said. "One must think of something while one is standing on sentry for hours; and I can assure you that it helped me very much through the long hours to imagine the various ways in which one might do service. I do not intend to take Sandwich into my confidence in the future. I consider that his retailing these ideas to you is nothing short of gross treachery. In future he will not hear of these matters until they have been accomplished. When I bring the Empress into the Legation, tied on my back in a sack, he will be obliged to own that there is method in my madness."

"But really, Rex, you have no idea of carrying out any of these mad schemes?"

"I have no idea of carrying out any mad schemes, Jenny. Schemes are only considered mad when they are not carried out; when they are accomplished, everyone says how simple and easy they are. However, whether mad or simple, I have no idea of attempting to execute any of them at present. Possibly some day I may require your assistance. I do not say that I shall, because I have not at present fixed upon any plan, but when I do, I may put your devotion to the test."

"I will do anything that I can do, Rex," Jenny said seriously. "After your rescue of us from the yamen at Chafui I don't think I should consider anything that you might suggest as impossible."

"Very well. I am afraid, however, that I shan't be able to ask for your assistance, Jenny, for my brain really doesn't seem capable of inventing anything. I am always thinking of things when on sentry, but I have never managed to hit on a satisfactory scheme. It is horribly annoying. I came back into this place on purpose to be of some good, and yet I don't seem to be doing any good at all."

"Why, my dear Bateman, you are doing as much good as

anyone else," Sandwich laughed. "Nobody else performs any out-of-the-way feats, and why should you be called upon to do so? You do as much as anyone else."

"Yes, I know all about that; but, you see, every day our position gets a little worse. The French, the Americans, and the Germans are all hard pressed; the Japanese, the Italians, and the Austrians are gradually losing ground in the Fu; and I feel that something ought to be done, if I could but find out what that something is. If we had had some inventive sort of chap up here—a man like Edison, for instance—he would have hit upon fifty plans for annoying the enemy. He would have invented special electrical machines for startling them, would have contrived substitutes for cannon, would have peppered them with pneumatic machines; in fact there is no saying what he would not have done."

"But even an Edison would have required a workshop. We haven't a machine of any kind, not even a simple lathe."

"Well, he would have done without them," Rex said positively. "It vexes me very much that no one here seems to have an inventive genius. Look at Archimedes, what wonderful dodges he invented for the defence of Syracuse!"

Sandwich and his two companions laughed loudly.

"I am afraid there is no Archimedes here, Bateman, and you must put up with the ordinary means of defence, which do not, after all, succeed so badly. We have held out for a month now, and at the end of another month we shall still be in possession of a good deal of ground; but by that time I should think relief must be at hand, even allowing for the fact that there will be troops of half a dozen nationalities in the relieving column and the consequent delays, for it is not to be expected that the different sections will work well together. Besides, it is evident, from the desultory manner

in which they attack, that the Chinese are very much divided among themselves. Look at the way they get guns into good positions to annoy us, and then fail to use them. If they were to plant cannon all round us and keep up a steady fire, they could knock all the Legations to pieces in the course of a week. This must be due to disputes among the leaders, for we know that the Chinese soldiers are obedient as well as brave, and that if the guns are not used it can be from no fault on their part. I feel very confident, therefore, that even without the assistance of an Edison or an Archimedes we shall manage to hold out till relief comes."

A day or two after this, Sandwich and Rex were chatting together in their own quarters, when the former said: "Those cannon will soon bring the whole place about our ears. They have already done terrible damage. To-day three men have been killed, and the house is little better than a ruin; it is impossible for men to stay in the upper floor."

Rex sat silent for some little time, and then, without making a remark, got up and went to find Ah Lo.

"Ah Lo," he said, "you know the damage those guns across the market have been doing?"

"Yes, master, very serious. Other guns not do so much harm; those very bad."

"Well, I am thinking that I might go out and silence them."

Ah Lo looked at Rex by the light of a lantern, which was hanging overhead, to see if he were speaking in earnest.

"Master would get killed," he said, shaking his head.

"I don't think so, Ah Lo. Of course there is some danger in it, but I think that it might be managed."

"Ah Lo is ready to go with his master, if he chooses to kill himself," the Chinaman said; "but killed he would be for sure."

"I don't think so," Rex said. "Anyhow, it is worth the risk. They will have that house down, and the wall behind it, if they are allowed to go on much longer. Then there will be a fierce rush and all will be over."

"But how will master do it?"

"Well, I shall take a hammer and a long spike with me, and if you go with me—but mind you, Ah Lo, I don't ask you to go——"

"You must take me too."

"Very well then, as only two guns are worrying us, you take one and I take the other. We can do it in half a minute. Of course you must manage to get me some native disguise, for we shall have to mix with the enemy to some extent, they are sure to be sitting and talking round the guns. And then we must run for it."

"Can't run across the market. We know that there are lots of them in the houses on this side of it."

"No, I quite see that, Ah Lo. We must run the other way. I think I can run faster than most Chinamen, and if we get a start of a few yards, which is likely, as they will not at first realize what has been done, we ought to be able to escape and find a secure hiding-place. Then the next day we can work our way back at some point the enemy are not watching."

"Very well, master," Ah Lo said in a more hopeful tone; "when do you go, sir?"

"I will go to-morrow night, as we shall require some time to make our preparations. Mind, you are not to say a word to anyone of what we are going to do, for if he heard of it, it is possible that Sir Claude Macdonald would stop us."

"Ah Lo will tell nobody, master. It is all the same to him whether he is killed outside or starved inside."

Rex went to bed, and lay awake for some time thinking

how the affair had best be managed. He came to the conclusion that the only way would be to lower himself by a rope from the end of the burnt library, then make his way round and come up to the guns from behind. It struck him that it would perhaps be advisable to tie knots in the rope as a help to them when they were climbing back again, but in the end he decided to make a rope-ladder, for he had a strong idea that neither Ah Lo nor himself would be able to swarm up a rope. When morning broke he went down to the store, which he unlocked, and after rummaging about for some time found a long rope, two hammers, and some long spike-nails. He hid the hammers and spikes in his bed, and then, retiring to an unfrequented corner of the Residency, he soon manufactured a rope-ladder, cutting some boughs to form the rungs. This ladder he concealed near the spot where he intended to get over the wall.

Later in the day Ah Lo brought him a Chinese dress.

"We take guns with us, sir?"

"No, Ah Lo, they would only be in our way when we wanted to run. We can, however, hide our swords under our clothes, and I will get a revolver and ammunition for you. I can borrow them from Mr. Sandwich, telling him that I am going on guard, and that my own weapon has somehow got out of order."

The day passed off quietly, except that the guns across the market still continued to batter the house and to make a breach in the wall behind it. Soon after midnight Ah Lo joined his master. Rex's disguise had been laid down by the rope-ladder, and as soon as he got there he changed and prepared for a start. They got safely over the wall and then struck off in a direction opposite to the market. For some time they saw no one in the streets, but as they got farther away they here and there met people hurrying along, evi-

dently fearful of being within the range of the firing from the wall. When they had gone some distance they turned and made a sweep towards the market. Now they came upon groups of soldiers. Firing had ceased for the day, and would not begin again until two or three hours before daybreak. An occasional bullet whistled overhead, showing that the garrison were on the alert; for although the firing generally ended with the day, yet fierce attacks were often made during the night.

Rex and Ah Lo sauntered quietly about among the soldiers, gradually getting nearer and nearer to the spot where the guns were placed.

"I suppose we can look at them," said Ah Lo, who with several others was standing near them.

"Certainly you can," the man said. "They are doing good work. In another couple of days we shall have the wall down, and then we shall finish off with the white devils."

"That is good," Ah Lo said.

"They have been here too long as it is, and ought to be cleared off without delay. When we have got rid of the last of them we shall be our own masters again. They are always meddling in our affairs, just as if they were our masters instead of only living here by permission of the Empress. They even venture to tell us what we should do, and their bishops get made mandarins, and then, if their people commit crimes, they will not have them punished. We have put up with it too long; now we are going to make an end of it once and for all."

"Quite right!" Ah Lo said, as he lounged up to the gun, for at that moment Rex moved towards the other. While they pretended to be examining the guns, they quietly inserted the points of the spikes into the touch-holes. Then Rex looked round. The moment seemed favourable. Eight

or ten soldiers were standing close to them, talking over the fighting of the day, and the prospect of making a breach in the morning. Farther back other soldiers were laughing, talking, and cooking their rice. He waited a minute, and then signalled to Ah Lo. On the instant two heavy hammers fell on the heads of the spikes. With three quick strokes they drove them up to the head in the touch-holes, then, throwing down the hammers, they started off at full speed.

The soldiers shouted as they saw the spikes being driven in, but the strikers had gone some thirty or forty yards before they had sufficiently recovered from their surprise to think of pursuit. Rex and Ah Lo increased their lead to fifty yards before their pursuers had fairly got up their pace. They turned down the first lane they came to and then down another. Glancing back, Rex saw that so far they were holding their own, except that two Boxers, swifter than the rest, were some yards ahead of the main body of their pursuers. The Chinamen, as they ran, set up a perpetual shouting, which did not improve their speed.

"We must get rid of these two men," said Rex, speaking for the first time since they started. "Slacken your speed a little and let them come up to us, then suddenly turn round upon them."

"All right, sir!" Ah Lo said.

"I shall use my revolver, Ah Lo, you can use either your revolver or your sword, whichever you like."

A minute later the two foremost of the pursuers came rushing upon them, but the sudden pause of the fugitives had left them no time to draw their swords. Rex's revolver cracked out, laying one of them low, and Ah Lo, using his sword, struck the other with such force that he nearly decapitated him. There was a shout of rage from the party

REX'S REVOLVER CRACKED OUT.

behind. Rex and his companion, needless to say, did not stop to listen, but at once turned and continued their flight. They ran down till they were brought up suddenly at the end of a lane where a house rose straight in front of them. It was too late to retrace their steps.

"What is to be done, master?" Ah Lo asked.

"We must break in the door, if it is not open."

The first door they tried, however, was unfastened. They entered, shot the bolt to, and ran to the back of the house. They were disappointed, however, for there was no opening through which they could escape. Without wasting time they turned and ran upstairs to a terrace on the top of the house. Here a number of clothes flapped in the wind; it was evidently the family drying-ground.

"We can defend this ladder for a bit, Ah Lo, but they must beat us in the end. Let us scramble up to the other end of the street."

Looking down they saw that the lane was now full of soldiers, some of whom carried lanterns. It was no easy matter getting along on the roofs, as the houses were irregular in height. Sometimes they had to jump down ten or twelve feet, at others to help each other up walls of equal height. They were some distance along when they heard a sudden shout, and knew that their pursuers had broken down the door of the house and had entered, and another that told that the enemy had gained the roof and found that it was deserted. In a short time lanterns appeared on the roofs of some of the houses, but the fugitives were already within a house or two of the end of the lane.

"The streets are full of people," Rex said, peering over. "We can't get down here. We must jump upon the house behind; it is four or five feet lower than this, so we shall have no difficulty."

Without hesitation he stood upon the parapet behind and leapt. Ah Lo followed his example.

"Now," said Rex, "let us run down. The house will probably be empty, as the family is sure to run out to see what the row is about."

There were, indeed, some women standing in the lower room, and these gave a cry of astonishment when the two fugitives rushed past them through the open door and joined the people who were hurrying up to the other end of the lane. Now that they were mixed up in the crowd, Rex felt that there was little fear of being detected. Only the soldier they had been talking to would know their faces, and as he had been among the first to take up the pursuit he must now be down at the farther end of the next lane, or more probably on the roof of the house they had entered. As the crowd was already very dense, he could not possibly make his way back.

Suddenly flames broke out from one of the houses they had crossed, and soon it was seen that other houses were on fire also. A cry of dismay broke from the Chinese standing near. They were accustomed to high-handed proceedings, for many houses had been burnt by the Boxers in the pursuit of plunder or in their indignation at failing to find any. They had now evidently fired the houses as the easiest way of destroying the fugitives, who had shown that they would sell their lives dearly.

Gradually Rex and Ah Lo withdrew themselves to the edge of the excited crowd. Many of the people were already moving off to carry their goods from the houses in the adjoining lanes, for the wind was blowing strong, and there was no saying how far the conflagration would spread, as the houses were but flimsy erections, being composed chiefly of bamboo and mud, which would catch like tinder when at-

tacked by the flame. They moved away from the scene gradually, and without any appearance of haste. The alarm had evidently spread some distance, for they met a fire-brigade of men carying tubs of water slung on poles hurrying towards the spot. People were standing at their doors watching the blaze, and calculating whether, if it spread, it would come their way.

"Well, Ah Lo," Rex said, "you see it has not been a very dangerous business after all, and if those two soldiers we killed had not been so fast we might have got away without being pressed at all."

"It was very unfortunate for them," Ah Lo said quietly, "and I don't suppose they knew what they were running for. Very few of them could have known that we had spiked the guns. It was lucky that those two houses were so close to each other that we were able to leap across, otherwise they might have had us."

"I don't think they would, even in that case, Ah Lo. We might really have gone down through that last house and joined the crowd there."

"We might, master, but I don't think we could. Everyone had run to the streets by that time, and doubtless many were standing at their doors, and would have noticed two strange men running behind them."

"At any rate we are well out of it, Ah Lo. We can now walk quietly round and go up our ladder; but mind you do not say a word to anyone about this affair."

"Why not, master?" Ah Lo asked in surprise.

"For two or three reasons. In the first place, the governor might blame us for undertaking a business of that sort without asking permission. You see, although I did not think so at the time, any Chinaman coming along there and seeing that ladder might have gone and reported the fact,

and by its means a large number of the enemy might have crossed the wall before they were discovered, and the safety of the garrison would then have been endangered. That is one reason. The next is, that I don't want everyone to be making a fuss now that it is over. Some might blame me for my recklessness, while others might pat me on the back because of my success. That is a thing that I should specially hate. We did not do it for praise, but to be of service to the garrison. For these reasons I want you to hold your tongue, and not whisper a word to anyone. We are quite content that we have rendered good service to the Legation, saved many lives, and put the garrison in a position to repair damages unmolested. That ought to be satisfaction enough for anyone."

"Very good, master; Ah Lo will keep his mouth shut if master wishes it. He is not a talker, and now that he knows what master wishes he will do it."

Half an hour's walking brought them to the foot of the ladder, and having climbed over the wall they coiled up the rope again, and Rex took it to the magazine and put it where he had found it. Then, satisfied that he had done a good piece of work, he went and lay down until it was his turn to go on sentry.

The next morning there was considerable surprise when it was found that the two troublesome guns were silent. It was some time before there was any thought of making good the damage, but as the hours went by, and there was still no firing, a strong body of men was put on to repair the defences as fast as possible.

Many were the surmises and conjectures circulated through the Residency as to the cause of the change. Some said that the Peace party had again got the upper hand, and that fresh terms had been offered. Others asserted that fresh

cannon had been planted round the Residency, and that the others were to hold their fire till these were ready for action, when an overwhelming fire would be poured in. Some again were of opinion that the soldiers had mutinied on account of the heavy losses they had sustained without making any appreciable progress, while a few maintained that the relieving army must be near at hand, and that every fighting-man had been sent out to oppose them. The next morning Sandwich came into the room where Rex was eating his breakfast after being relieved from guard.

"You know, Rex," he said excitedly, "about those two guns being silenced."

"Yes. I suppose everyone in the Residency knows about it," Rex replied quietly.

"I have just heard a report that your servant asserts that it was your doing."

Rex jumped up with an angry exclamation.

"The rascal! I will break every bone in his body. He promised me faithfully that not a word about it should pass his lips."

"Then it is really true?" Sandwich said in surprise.

"True! Yes, but I was particularly anxious that it should not be known, so that I should escape the fuss that people are always ready to make about every little thing. I will go out and talk to Master Ah Lo. I can't think how he can have spoken about it after his promises to me, for he has always proved himself a most faithful fellow. I can't believe he did it to get a reward, but I don't see any other motive that he can have had."

So saying he hurried out of the room, followed by Sandwich, who in vain attempted to get some of the particulars from him. He found Ah Lo standing with the Provost Marshal's hand on his shoulder.

"Your servant has been making a row," the latter said, "and thrashing a servant of the Belgian embassy."

"Yes, sir, and I would thrash him again," Ah Lo blurted out.

"What has he done?" Rex asked, calming down instantly on seeing his man in this predicament.

"It was like this, sir. The Belgian man came up to three or four of us who were standing together, and he said, 'Do you know who did it?' So we all said 'No,' and I said it as loud as any of them. Then he said 'I did.' We all stood astonished, one as much as the other; and he went on: 'I crept out of the Russian Legation and made my way through the market and got up to the guns and silenced them!' Then, sir, I was furious, and I shouted, 'You are a liar! my master did it,' and I seized him by the throat and beat him. I know I was wrong, master, to say anything about you, but my rage was too great for me to think what I was saying. Then others ran in, and of course the Provost Marshal came, and having once said it, of course I repeated it."

"You were wrong, Ah Lo, but at the same time I can make allowances for your indignation. Now that the thing has begun it must be gone through with. Provost, will you take this man before Sir Claude Macdonald? We will go too, and I think between us we will get at the truth of the matter."

"I am ready," the Belgian said, "you both wish to win my honour and reward from me, after my risking my life. Sir Claude Macdonald will soon see which story is true."

"I have no doubt he will," Rex said. "We had better go at once, Provost, or we shall have the whole of the Legation here," for a crowd was rapidly gathering round them.

When they reached the ambassador's quarters the Provost went in first to acquaint him with the cause of the dispute,

and then the others entered. Sir Claude acknowledged Rex's salute, and then, turning to the Belgian, said: "As you seem to have made the first claim to this honour, I shall be obliged if you will give me the account of how you managed it."

"I went out through the back of the Russian embassy," the man said; "there is a little tower close to the corner."

"But that is known to be full of Chinese."

"It was full," the man said, "but they were all asleep. Then I passed through the market-place unobserved."

"How was that?" Sir Claude asked. "Only the night before we made a sortie, and found the place held in great force."

"They must all have gone out," the man said; "I saw none of them. Then, creeping very cautiously, I got to the guns," he continued. "The soldiers there were also asleep, and I silenced the guns without difficulty."

"And how did you do that?" Sir Claude asked.

"I," the man hesitated, "poured some water into the touch-holes from the pitcher I had brought with me. Then I returned the way that I had come."

Sir Claude waved his hand with a gesture of contempt.

"Water could only have silenced the guns for five minutes," he said. "You know of no better way of silencing them?"

The man hesitated.

"I might have thrown them off the carriage," he said, "but I was afraid of doing this, as it might have awakened the men."

"I should think it would," Sir Claude said quietly, "and if you had had the strength of ten men you could not have got them over. Mr. Bateman, will you kindly give me your account of the affair?"

"I am sorry, sir, to give any account at all, for I had particularly ordered my servant not to open his lips on the subject. Enraged at this fellow's preposterous claim, however, he lost his temper and blurted out the truth. It was a very simple affair, sir, though not so simple, I own, as this gentleman's exploit, for I did not find the whole of the Chinese army asleep." He then related the steps they had taken, their pursuit and escape.

"You agree in every particular with what your master has said?" Sir Claude asked Ah Lo.

"He tell it all right; just so, that just how it happen."

"Provost Marshal," Sir Claude said quietly, "take that man out and give him three dozen well laid on for his infamous attempt to gain credit and reward at the expense of others."

The Provost bowed and left the room with his prisoner, who began to howl for mercy.

"Now, Mr. Bateman," Sir Claude said, turning to Rex, "I hardly know whether to praise or blame you. This is the third dangerous expedition you have made on your own account, and, like the others, it has been successful. Still, as I told you on the last occasion, while shut up here, you, although a civilian, are subject to military rule, and it is strictly forbidden for anyone to leave the circle of the defences without permission. For doing this I cannot but speak severely. On the other hand, the advantages which have been attained by your silencing those guns are quite inestimable. Their fire menaced our defences most seriously, and if it had continued many hours longer we should have been exposed to a desperate attack by that half-frenzied mob. That attack we might have repulsed or we might not, but assuredly it would have taxed our strength to the utmost, and even if the first had been unsuccessful, the second might

not have been. I thank you, sir, in the name of the whole of the garrison, foreign as well as British, for the service you have rendered us. Already the defences have been so far repaired as to enable use to withstand any sudden attack; very soon they will be still stronger. If we succeed in winning our deliverance and holding out till the relieving column arrives it will be to no small extent due to your courage and pluck. It must add considerably to your pleasure to know that your cousins are among those who will benefit by your bravery."

"I am greatly pleased and honoured by your approval, sir," Rex said, "but I would very much rather that the affair had not been known at all. I carried it out assuredly without any wish of gaining credit, but simply for the good of the garrison, and I should very greatly have preferred escaping the talk and congratulation that I shall now have to submit to."

Sir Claude smiled.

"My dear lad," he said, "it is only right that the great deeds men do should be known, if only as an example to others. If we all shrank from danger there would be few great deeds. You know the old saying, 'to the victor is the wreath,' and it is only right that it should be so. It is one thing to glorify yourself and another to be glorified by others. Ah Lo, here are fifty guineas from me as a mark of my approbation of the manner in which you assisted your master in carrying out this undertaking."

In a very short time the story was known throughout the Residencies, and Rex received so many congratulations and so much praise that he determined to leave Pekin as soon as possible and try to join the relieving column.

CHAPTER X

A MISSION

THE next morning there was a serious alarm. The Italians and Austrians fell back suddenly under a strong and violent attack, and had the Chinese pressed their advantage the Fu must have fallen and the British Legation have been laid open to attack on that side. Fortunately, on a previous occasion the Japanese had made a sham retreat, and, having induced the enemy to follow them, had then inflicted heavy loss upon them. Fearing a renewal of this strategy the Chinese fell back, and the Italian commander was able to rally his forces and reoccupy the abandoned position. The result showed, however, that the Italians could not be trusted to hold their ground without support, and consequently a small body of British marines were added to the garrison, an event that caused almost as much excitement as the return of a native messenger sent out in the morning by Mr. Squiers of the United States Legation.

This man reported that he had gone out by one gate and had come in by another. He said there were no soldiers in the Chinese city, that business was being carried on as usual inside the Chien Mên, the gate by which Rex had entered the city. To prove his statement he brought in with him a couple of chickens and a few peaches. He also reported that the Emperor and Empress were still in the city, and that the French and native converts still held out at the North Cathedral.

While discussing the matter afterwards Rex said to Sandwich: "The report quite bears out what I have said; there is no difficulty in going out of or getting into the city from the north side."

"That seems to be so, but that does not show that it is at all easy to enter the Forbidden City, still less to reach the Empress. The question is: Where is Prince Ching? It seems to me that he is the chap that we want to get hold of."

"It is certain that he disapproves altogether of the proceedings of the Empress and Prince Tung, and the sounds of firing which we have heard several times in the city can only be accounted for by the supposition that his troops are fighting Tung's. Of course Ching lives somewhere in the Imperial City, and as the Northern Cathedral stands in that part, there must be some way of getting in."

"You are not thinking of carrying him off, are you?"

"No, I should like to carry Tung off, so that we could stick him up in some prominent position and send him word that we should cut his head off if the troops attacking us did not withdraw. No, I had no intention of doing any carrying-off, but I was thinking that it would be possible to take out a message to Ching of a friendly character, of course from Sir Claude."

"That is not quite such an impossible business," Sandwich admitted, "though the betting would be a hundred to one against your being able to see him."

"Well, of course, it would be difficult, but one could not say how difficult till one tried. Nevertheless, as that messenger went out this morning and came in again, it is evident that things are going on pretty well as usual in the town, except round here, and that people walk about without being questioned or interfered with."

Rex thought the matter over all day while he was at work,

and after his duty was over went into the Residency and asked to see the Minister. After waiting half an hour he was shown in.

"How are you, Mr. Bateman?" Sir Claude said. "I have not seen you for the past fortnight. Can I do anything for you?"

"Well, sir, you know that this morning one of the natives under Mr. Squiers went into the town and came out again safely?"

The Minister nodded.

"Well, sir, what one man has done another might do. I have thought that you might like to communicate with Prince Ching."

"I should certainly like to do so if it were possible."

"In that case, sir, I should be glad to try to take a communication to him. I have passed out several times as a Chinaman without exciting the slightest suspicion, and it seems to me that I could at any rate reach Ching's Palace without any special danger. How I should obtain an audience with him would, of course, depend upon circumstances, and I should guide myself by these when I got there. I do not at all say that I should succeed, but it seems to me that it would be well worth trying if you are desirous of communicating with him."

"It is a bold proposal, Mr. Bateman, a very bold proposal. Certainly I should like to communicate with Ching, and to learn from him how he really stands affected towards us, what the Empress's intentions are, and to what extent Tung and his partisans influence her. Of course it would be a joint letter, signed by all of us—but it would be a fearfully dangerous service. As he is at enmity with Tung, and probably in bad repute with the Empress, he would he sure to be surrounded with guards and soldiers. Even if you were to

reach him, you might not be safe. At the beginning of the trouble, he certainly assured us of his regard, and did his best to prevent Tung and the Boxers from attacking us, but there is no saying what his opinions may be now. Seeing how far the others have gone, he may have ceased to oppose them, and might either have you put to death or hand you over to the Empress."

"I am perfectly well aware that there is danger, sir, but if there is a chance of my mission succeeding, or of conferring any benefit upon all here, I should be ready to undertake it. I do not engage to deliver the communication, but I will at least do all in my power to do so. Everyone here is risking his life every half-hour, and I do not think that I should be risking mine to any greater extent than the officers in the Fu, or indeed those at any of the barricades."

"At any rate, Mr. Bateman, I thank you for the offer. We shall have, as usual, a council this evening of all the Ministers, and I will discuss your offer with my colleagues. Have you thought what character you will go in?"

"I should say either a Chinese bonze or a Buddhist priest. It seems to me that in either of these I should find it easier to obtain access to him than in any other character, except perhaps in that of a high-class mandarin. This would be in several respects the best, but I should have to be attended by at least four men. Of course my own man could be one, and the others could be natives got up in suitable attire."

"That would certainly be the most appropriate. Perhaps as a second- or third-class mandarin, with two attendants, you might succeed as well. If you went as a first-class mandarin you might easily be recognized; whereas, as a third-class mandarin you might have arrived from the provinces and so be unknown. Well, I will think it over, Mr. Bateman. I should certainly be very glad to learn what Ching's real

opinions are, and how far he will be inclined to aid us. Will you look in again to-night at ten o'clock?"

"Yes, sir, and I hope you will have decided to make me useful."

Rex said nothing either to his cousins or to Sandwich of the offer he had made, but he had a long talk with Ah Lo about it.

"I don't think there will be any difficulty in getting to the king's palace, master, but I cannot say whether you could get into the palace. Ching will no doubt always have people with him. If he has, what would you say? You could not declare who you were before others."

"No. I agree that that would be a difficulty."

"I should be afraid that he would always have people with him."

"Yes. I rather reckon upon there being a crowd. I expect the ante-room would be full, and my idea is that, if possible, I should slip away from the crowd and gain his private apartments, so that I might meet him after he had given his audience for the day. If I found that impossible, I should have to pray, when my time to speak to him came, for a private audience. If he demurred to this I could hand him my card, on which would be written in Chinese that I had come from Sir Claude Macdonald and implored a private interview. Of course it is possible that he might order me to be arrested, but it is more likely that he would see me. It is just a toss-up. If he is really friendly to us, I should be safe. If, on the other hand, he has only been playing, as so many of them do play, a double part, he might send me to Tung or the Empress for instant execution. In that case, of course, my only chance would be that you and the three men with you could effect a rescue, and that, of course, must depend on how many guards are sent with me."

At the appointed hour Rex again went to the quarters of the British Ambassador.

"We have talked the matter over, Mr. Bateman. It is not a mission that we should think of asking anyone to undertake, but undoubtedly good might come of it, and at any rate, you will gather much valuable information. We therefore do not like to decline the offer you have made, so to-morrow morning we will have a letter to Ching written. What disguise have you settled upon?"

"I think, sir, a mandarin of the third or fourth class would be the most suitable."

"The only thing against that is that we have no appropriate clothes and no means of obtaining them."

"I was afraid that might be so, sir. In that case I might either be a Buddhist priest, whose garments could be made out of anything, or a respectable land-owner, who might reasonably wish to hand in some petition or complaint of bad conduct on the part of Ching's troops, or to ask for an order of protection against them."

"That would be certainly much easier, so far as the costume goes. A land-owner might very well have a couple of armed retainers, and would, I should think, have as good a chance of obtaining an audience as a mandarin of low rank."

"I should be glad to have a map of the town, sir, in order that I may see the exact position of the prince's palace."

"That is easy enough"; and Sir Claude opened a bureau and drew out a large map.

"That is Ching's palace," he said; "it is, as you see, by the side of the lake, about half-way between the Northern Cathedral and the bridge across the lake."

Rex examined the map carefully.

"Thank you, sir!" he said when he had finished. "I shall be able to make my way there without difficulty."

"I will give orders for the dress to be made; that and the letter to Ching shall be ready to-morrow afternoon, and I will request Mr. Cockburn to choose one of his most reliable men to accompany your man as an attendant. I need hardly say that it would be well not to mention to anyone what you are going to do. We have every reason to believe that in some way or other the Chinese get accurate information of all that passes here. Will you go out in broad daylight?"

"No, sir. I could scarcely hope to get out in that way. The Chinese are quietest toward morning, and by sallying out from the barricade near the Russian Consulate, I may be able to pass, as Mr. Squiers's messenger did, through the Chien Mên. Once through that, I should be perfectly safe, and could go round and enter by the Si Chi Mên. After that I should be quite master of my own movements, and, making my way round behind the city, might enter the Imperial City by the How Mên, and, passing between the Northern Cathedral and wall, make my way to Prince Ching's palace. The fact that I was going with a petition to him would be sufficient as an answer to any enquiries that might be made. It would be well that I should be furnished with a set of petitions in the usual form, asking for protection against the rough doings of some of his soldiers who had carried off several of my beasts and threatened me with personal violence."

"A very good idea; that shall be ready for you with my letter."

At two o'clock the next day Rex obtained the documents, together with a pass to let him through the barricade, and some clothes that had been made for him, appropriate to the character that he was going to assume. Going to Mr. Cock-

burn he found the native ready for him. He was a strong, powerful man, who carried a native shield and a long broad-sword and dagger, and who would have attracted no notice as a retainer of a well-to-do farmer. Ah Lo had obtained similar weapons from a heap of those that had been taken from the enemy who had fallen in the attacks upon our barricades. Rex directed the Chinaman to join Ah Lo in the evening, and to keep by his side. He himself passed the evening as usual with his friends.

The next morning at four o'clock he put on his disguise. After the others had gone to sleep he had got up and shaved his head, with the exception of a top knot, and to this, before starting, he fastened a pig-tail, which he curled up under a broad native hat. He placed his pistols out of sight under his girdle and put on a native sword. Then he made his way out to the spot where Ah Lo and the other man were lying. Both of them were awake, and at once rose and followed him. The Russian officer in charge of the barricade made some little demur at allowing him to go out, in spite of the pass, but when Rex made himself known to him he changed his attitude. The officer looked at him in surprise.

"You are well disguised, indeed, Mr. Bateman," he said; "even knowing you as well as I do, I should not recognize you. You are going on a mission, I suppose?"

"Yes, I am going to see what the state of things is in the town."

Keeping carefully in the shadow of such houses as were still standing, Rex, followed by the two men, made his way along noiselessly, and, reaching the Tung Pien Mên, passed out without interruption. They walked on till they were near the next gate, and when day had fairly broken, and the country people had begun to arrive, they entered

with them and then moved quietly along the streets, looking into the shops. No one paid the slightest attention to them. There were many soldiers about, but few Boxers, who appeared to have fallen quite into the background since the regular troops took the siege in hand. It was supposed that they had been sent out of the city to be drilled and disciplined by regular officers, as these men were far more turbulent than the regular soldiers, whose conduct was orderly, and who in no way interfered with the populace. Their disappearance greatly diminished the danger of passage through the streets.

It took the little party two or three hours to make the circuit of the walls of the Imperial City. When they arrived at the gate near the Northern Cathedral Rex was glad to find that the French priests and their Christian converts were still holding out gallantly. Nevertheless he could not help feeling great anxiety for them. The position was certainly a strong one, but it seemed hardly possible that sufficient food could have been collected to enable them to support themselves during a prolonged siege. From this point he went round towards Prince Ching's palace. Many soldiers were loitering about in front of the palace, and people of all sorts—officers, peasants, merchants, and others —were going in and out. Leaving his followers he entered the large hall. No questions were asked, and after waiting a short time he went up to one of the officials.

"I desire an audience with the prince," he said.

"Well," the man said, "you see how many there are before you. There is little chance that you will get an audience to-day."

"This is an urgent matter," Rex said, and slipped four taels into the man's hand.

The official nodded significantly, and half an hour later

showed him into the apartment where Ching was sitting with two or three secretaries.

Rex bowed to the ground.

"Your servant would request a private audience," he said. "I have letters of importance to submit to your Excellency, and pray that you will receive me in private."

After a moment's hesitation the prince signed to the secretaries to withdraw.

"Your Highness," Rex continued, as soon as they were alone, "I am not what I seem. I have come as a messenger from the British Minister, but as I could not make my way through the streets in my own costume, I have been obliged to adopt a disguise."

"The disguise is good," the prince said. "I should certainly have taken you for what you pretend to be."

Rex handed to him the Minister's letter. The prince read it carefully.

"I am anxious," he said, "to bring about peace, and have kept my soldiers from joining in the attack on the Legations. Unfortunately I can do little more. The Empress listens to the advice of Prince Tung and Prince Tuan. Hitherto at times she has inclined towards my advice, but unfortunately her sympathies are the other way. At present, however, she begins to doubt whether she has been wise in incurring the enmity of all the European powers together. I had an interview with her last night, and pointed out that Japan alone had in the last war proved herself victorious over us. Since then our army has undoubtedly increased in strength, has obtained large quantities of modern weapons, and has gained in discipline. At the same time we are now opposed not by the Japanese alone, but by the Russians and all the European powers. We might, it is true, overcome the Legations, but of what real benefit would that be to us? Before three months

had passed, an army of overwhelming strength would advance against Pekin, and no force that we could raise would have any chance of victory against it. What would be the consequence? We should have to submit, as we have done in previous wars, to great losses of territory, to the payment of a vast sum of money, and possibly even the dynasty would be endangered.

"The Empress listened to my arguments, but said that we had gone too far now to draw back. However, she said that she would turn the matter over in her mind. I have seen a considerable change in her demeanour in the last four or five days. Up to that time she would not even listen to me, and although she has always shown great friendship for me, I have expected every day to be relieved from all my functions. But the failure of the attempts of her troops to capture the Legations, as she had been assured by her advisers they would do, have preyed upon her. She is restless and irritable, and I believe she begins to doubt.

"The British Minister begs me to try to intervene again, and bring about a truce, until, at any rate, the course of events at Tientsin is seen. At present there is hard fighting going on round that place. It is difficult even for us to know what is passing, for naturally your commanders get the best of matters. It is certain, however, that we are not gaining ground, and that in a very short time many troops will come up from the ships. I am to see the Empress again this evening, and will use all my efforts to get her to order that hostilities shall cease for the present. I can point out that she cannot lose by so doing; the provisions must be running short, and your people, if they find that no relief can come to them, will be forced to surrender without further fighting. I shall urge upon her that these continued repulses of their attacks can but dishearten her troops, and that in all respects

she will benefit by a cessation of the fighting. I think that she is more and more coming to doubt whether she has acted wisely in allowing Prince Tung and the others of that party to influence her. A week ago I had lost all influence over her; now, although I am by no means restored to favour, she listens to me with more patience.

"Well, will you tell your Minister that I do not like to write to him, because you may be detected and seized on your way back, but that I am still friendly to you all, and will do my best this evening to bring about the cessation of hostilities. Say that although I may fail this time I feel sure that the attacks will cease in the course of a day or two, for I know that there is considerable discontent amongst the troops at the loss that they are suffering and their failure to make headway. They are also greatly dissatisfied with their leaders, and say that if they were all ordered to attack at once, instead of merely firing from a distance, they would certainly succeed. Will you say to the British Minister that I most cordially reciprocate his assurance of good-will, and trust that in the future I may again have the pleasure of meeting him personally. If I am successful this evening I shall take means to inform him that all serious attacks will cease. I do not say that there may be no more firing, for the troops are very much out of hand, and we cannot leave the Boxers out of account. There may, therefore, be desultory firing, but no real attack, unless indeed an army is advancing against us, in which case I fear there will be a renewal of hard fighting, in the first place because the troops will be worked up to a state of fury, and in the second because Prince Tung and the others will desire above all things to get the occupants of the Legations into their power to use them as hostages for obtaining good terms for themselves."

"I am indeed greatly obliged to your Highness," said Rex. "May I ask if you will place your signature to this petition of mine that my farm is to be respected by all bodies of troops or Boxers? that will secure my passage out of the town if I should be interrogated."

"A wise precaution," the prince said, as he attached his signature to the paper. "You are a brave young man; what is your name?"

"My name is Bateman," Rex replied. "I am not a resident of Pekin, and am only here because I brought two young ladies, relations of mine, from Chafui, where they were in danger of being slain, their father and mother and the other members of the missionary settlement having been already murdered."

A flash of amusement passed over the usually impassive face of the prince.

"I heard," he said, "that the governor's yamen was burned, and the report of the affair stated that two female captives, who were to have been executed on the following day, perished. It is possible that you had a hand in that."

Rex smiled.

"I had a little to do with it, your Highness, and I can assure you that the two captives did not perish there."

"I will ask no questions," the prince said; "it is clear that you are a brave young man, and I trust that whatever happens here you will escape."

Rex now took his leave. The people in the ante-room looked at him with some curiosity and not without hostility because of the time that his interview had lasted. He passed out quietly, however, without looking to right or left, and made his way towards the cathedral, where he was joined by his followers. He had a vague hope that he might be able to communicate with those besieged in the cathedral and learn

the state of their supplies, but he found that the investment of the place was complete. The cathedral and the adjoining building, however, were very strong, and he felt sure that they could repel every attack, and that if they yielded it must be to famine.

Making his way through the town he was more than once stopped and questioned by bodies of soldiers; but his story, supported as it was by Prince Ching's signature to his petition, at once removed all suspicion, and he sallied out through the Si Chi Mên without hindrance. He remained in the fields until after dark, then entered by the Tung Pien Mên, and made his way along the foot of the wall in the Chinese city till he reached the end of Legation Street. Shots were being exchanged with such frequency that he did not dare to go farther, so he and his followers lay down in the ruin of the American Methodist building. Towards morning, the firing having ceased, they crawled forward to within fifty yards of the barrier, then, standing up, ran forward, Rex shouting: "Don't fire, I am an Englishman."

"Who are you?" asked the sergeant at the post.

"My name is Bateman," said Rex, "and I have been to the town on a mission from the British Minister."

"Well, you had better climb over, whoever you are," the sergeant said. "We can question you when you get inside, but you will be shot in less than no time if you stop there."

As he spoke a rifle cracked out and the ball struck a stone within an inch or two of Rex's head. He and his followers scrambled over the barricade with alacrity, and, having satisfied the guard of their identity, passed on through the Russian Legation to the British head-quarters. He went straight to the room occupied by the students. Half of his comrades were away on guard, but Sandwich was in.

"So you are back again, Bateman!" Sandwich exclaimed. "You have as many lives as a cat."

"Well, I have run no risks this time. I have scarce had a question asked me since I left. There is really no reason whatever why natives from here shouldn't go regularly into the city, providing they can get rid of whatever it is that shows that they are Christians."

"And you mean to say that you really had an interview with Prince Ching?"

"Yes, I have really done so, and I found him a very civil old Chinaman, and very well disposed towards us. He is going to try to bring about an armistice."

As soon as Rex had changed his clothes he went to the Minister's and related to him the interview he had had with Prince Ching.

"I am greatly obliged to you, Mr. Bateman. What you tell me confirms the view that we have all along held, that Ching and some of the other Chinese officials are altogether opposed to the proceedings of Prince Tung. I can only hope that his influence will this time prevail, and that the Chinese will grant an armistice. I don't suppose that such an agreement will be well kept, but at least we shall have an easier time of it. It is probable that stirring events are going on at Tientsin. We know that the Taku Forts have been taken, and the Chinese may be willing to hold their hands until they see the result. They must know that provisions here will run short soon, and as they lose heavily in every fight it would be easier for them to wait and let famine do its work."

Two hours later a bugle was blown and a man came in with a letter from Prince Ching saying that he heard with gratification that the Foreign Ministers were all well, and that he now requested them to take their families and the members of their staff and leave the Legations in detach-

ments. Officers would be waiting to give them strict protection, and temporary accommodation would be found for them in the Tsung-li-yamen pending future arrangements for their return home, in order that friendly relations might be preserved.

The Ministers were all agreed that although this invitation could certainly not be accepted, it was a proof that the Chinese considered it impossible to capture the Legations, and for a time at least no further serious attacks would be made. Directly the meeting of the Ministers was over and their decision known, Rex went to see Sir Claude Macdonald.

"I have come to ask you for permission to make my way out. I am convinced from what Ching has said that there will be no more very serious fighting until perhaps a relief force moves forward, when they may make a last desperate attempt to capture the place. My father and mother are at Tientsin, where I am anxious to rejoin them. I have no fear whatever of being unable to get down, and my report of the situation here may have much influence upon the starting of the relief force. It is most essential that this should not be made in inadequate force. It is certain that the advance would be met with the whole strength of the Chinese army, which is not contemptible, and the failure of another attempt would be most disastrous for you here."

"Yes, that is most important," the Minister said, "and as we could defend ourselves here for some little time yet it is better that the column should not advance until it is strong enough to overcome all opposition. After all you have already done I have no doubt that you will be able to get into Tientsin without difficulty. When do you propose to start?"

"As soon as it is dark, sir. I shall make my way out by

the Tung Pien gate, follow the canal for some distance, and then strike for the river. I shall walk all night, lie up during the next day, and get near Tientsin by the following morning. I shall then see my best way to enter."

"You will hardly do it in two nights' walking."

"My man and I are both good walkers, sir. It would be about five-and-forty miles each night, but I think that we can do that; I am most anxious to get home."

After leaving the Minister, Rex went to the girls.

"I am going away again," he said. "I can leave you now without anxiety, for I am convinced that the Chinese can never take the place. I shall come up with the next relief column."

"We are very sorry that you are going, Rex, but really you do such rash things here that I think you will be safer away. If you remain we shall have you volunteering next to carry the Empress off."

"There was no rashness in my going into the city, Jenny. I was dressed just like everyone else and attracted no attention whatever. There is little danger in going down to Tientsin, though there may be some risk perhaps in getting into the town. At any rate I can leave you here with confidence. If I thought that there was any doubt about it I should take you both down with me now; but we should be at least five days instead of two, and the risk would therefore be much greater, and if the place should be besieged I might find it quite impossible to get you in."

"We would much rather stay here; we are very busy and are happy to be of use. Everyone is very kind to us, and we get on much better now than before we came to the hospital, for we have no time to think or grieve over the past. So you are going to-night?"

"Yes, we shall start directly the coast is clear, and we shall

go out as we came in. Of course if there is heavy firing we must wait."

Rex and Ah Lo succeeded in slipping out of Pekin without attracting attention, and set out in the direction of Tientsin with all possible speed. They had not gone far, however, before they were compelled to hide from a band of Boxers. This happened several times within a very short period, and Rex at last decided that it would be safer for both if they were to proceed by different routes. At first Ah Lo would not consent to such a course, but in the end Rex's arguments prevailed, and, having arranged to meet at a point near Tientsin, they shook hands and separated.

Some hours later Rex was lying among some bushes near a river, where he had thrown himself down to rest, when suddenly the stillness was broken by a deep roar. Rex started and a cold shudder ran through him. He was not acquainted with the roar of a tiger, but had no doubt whatever what it was. While they were chatting together one day his father had told him that tigers were by no means uncommon, especially in the jungle country near rivers, and that although they occasionally carried off cattle it was seldom that they meddled with the natives. He felt no doubt, however, that the animal he had heard was a tiger. It had probably been disturbed by the firing and the movements of numbers of armed men, and the thought that it was probably unusually hungry came across his mind.

He listened eagerly, and when presently he heard a stealthy footfall, he drew his pistol from his belt and threw himself down, for he remembered having heard that tigers prefer living quarry to carrion. He had not lain thus long before he heard the animal breathing heavily. It came closer and closer; he could hear it snuffing him from head to foot. Then it placed its paw upon him. The weight was great, but Rex,

who was lying on his face, still kept perfectly quiet. He held his breath for as long as possible and then took another breath, as gently and as silently as he could. Then he felt the animal remove its paw, and begin to walk round and round him. He remembered now that the river was but ten yards away, and that if he could but get a start he might possibly escape. But while he was considering the advisability of making a dash for it the tiger returned and seized him by the shoulder. Fortunately Rex had on a thick cloak, and though the pain was considerable, the animal was apparently only endeavouring to find out whether he were dead. The strain, however, was too great to be borne long. He felt that at any moment the animal might bite him in earnest, and that any movement on his part would certainly cause it to do so. Quietly, and gradually, he moved his arm upwards. The tiger gave an angry growl as he did so, and he felt the pressure of its teeth increasing.

There was no time for hesitation now. He raised his arm gradually to the level of the tiger's eyes and fired. With a sudden roar, the tiger leapt back. Rex was on his feet in an instant, and, making a dash for the river, he threw himself in. A moment later the tiger was on the bank. It fell in close to him and swam about confusedly until, at last, it regained the bank, and there it stood roaring. It was evident to Rex that he had partially or wholly blinded it. He struck out down stream, but a few strokes showed him that he was so completely shaken by the ordeal he had gone through that he could not long support himself.

At this moment he saw that there was a junk lying ahead of him. A number of Chinamen on board were shouting and gesticulating, and as he watched them they began to fire in the direction of the tiger's roars. Rex swam round to the other side of the junk, unseen by the excited natives; then,

feeling too exhausted to go farther, he climbed up by means of the oars, which had been left in position by the rowers, and, diving down an open hatchway, threw himself on something hard below. As he lay there he could hear the tiger roar terribly, but as the sound decreased he knew that the animal was moving away.

The firing presently ceased, but the talking of the Chinese continued, and Rex guessed that they were discussing who had fired the shot. He heard a boat row ashore, but after a time this returned, having found no signs of the tiger or its supposed victim. When they returned, the din gradually subsided and all became quiet again. By this time Rex had recovered; his shoulder was almost powerless, but he managed to crawl back to the hatchway, and, raising himself, he looked out.

The Chinamen were sitting about on the deck, some cooking and others smoking their little pipes. He thought it probable that after the excitement of the night they would remain up till morning, and in that case his risk of discovery was great. Doubtless he might hide himself in the cargo until that was discharged, but this might not be for some days, and he was anxious in the extreme to reach Tientsin as soon as possible. He therefore resolved to escape at once. He guessed that, with the exception of those who had gone ashore in the boat, the men would not have reloaded their firearms, and that, once ashore, he would be able to distance them. Several Chinamen were sitting between the hatch and the bulwark, but, climbing cautiously on deck, he reached the side of the vessel in a couple of strides and sprang overboard before anyone noticed him. There was a lull of surprise among the Chinese, and then a confused jabbering, followed by several musket shots. But Rex had dived, and having swum under water as long as he could hold his breath,

he felt sure, when he came up, that he could no longer be distinctly seen in the darkness.

Then he heard some of the men try to move the boat again, and instead of making direct for the shore, he swam along parallel to it, knowing that the boat would go a great deal faster than he could swim. He heard the shouts of the men as they landed, and then, turning, swam for the other side. When he reached the bank he crawled among the bushes and lay down. For some time he remained without moving, but suddenly he sprang to his feet; the tiger had begun to howl again, and it was but a short distance from him. He knew that even if the brute's sight was entirely destroyed its scent would bring it towards him, and having much more fear of the tiger than of the men, he again jumped into the river. He could hear the shouts of the Chinese, and, judged by their number, that they had been joined by many of their companions on the junk. He remained in the water till morning dawned, when a savage yell told him that he had been discovered by the Chinese on the other side.

The roar of the tiger had ceased, but he could hear its low moanings not far off. Nevertheless he felt that if he were to escape he must risk another encounter with the animal. He therefore made for the shore again, and climbed up on the bank. Looking back as he did so, he saw that the Chinese were leaping into their boat; then, without further delay he dashed in among the trees. When he reached the other side of the jungle he saw to his dismay a large number of Chinese soldiers in a village some three hundred yards away. He crept back again, therefore, among the bushes, and keeping just inside them moved cautiously along, taking the utmost pains not to show any signs of his presence. After proceeding a hundred yards or so in this way he approached the edge and looked out. A number of Chinese were just issuing

THERE WAS A LULL OF SURPRISE, THEN A CONFUSED JABBERING, FOLLOWED BY SEVERAL MUSKET-SHOTS.

from the bush, and one of them at once ran across towards the village. Rex moved forward again, this time leaving the edge and plunging into the heart of the jungle.

The Chinese could not, he knew, have recognized his as a white man, but his extraordinary conduct in hiding in the junk, and the unusual method he adopted of leaving it, would have shown them that at any rate he was not one of themselves, and would perhaps have suggested to them that he was going down with a message from Pekin.

He was presently aware, by the loud shouting, that at least some of the soldiers had joined in the pursuit. The strip of jungle was of no great width, and as he could not therefore hope to escape by keeping to it, he made his way back towards the river. When he made the bank again he saw, to his satisfaction, that the boat in which his pursuers had crossed was lying only some fifty yards away, with but one Chinaman sitting in it. This man, he decided, must be silenced at any cost, for he would give the alarm the moment he was in the water. He therefore approached him as quietly as possible, keeping among the bushes until he was opposite to the boat.

The Chinaman was evidently listening, for he was standing up in the boat, his attention probably attracted by the slight rustle Rex had made in coming along. Rex gathered himself together and sprang suddenly into the boat, grasping the Chinaman by the throat and rolling with him upon the floorboards. He could have shot him easily enough, but he knew that the sound would draw all his pursuers to the spot, and so defeat his purpose. The Chinaman was a powerful man, but Rex had taken such a grip of his throat that he was unable to shake it off. The desperate conflict continued for a minute or two. Then the Chinaman's struggles grew more feeble, his colour became almost black, his little eyes began

to stare; indeed he seemed at the point of death. Rex was reluctant to kill the man, so he bound his arms tightly to his sides with a rope which he found in the boat, and stuffed his mouth was a piece of cloth which he cut from the man's own coat. Then, leaving him lying senseless in the bottom, he seized one of the oars.

As the channel was shallow, he was able to punt across, and as he did so he noted with satisfaction that the junk was so far away that those on board would take him for a native. On reaching the other side he jumped ashore, pushed the boat out into the stream with all his strength, and then, turning, made off as fast as he could go. After covering some two miles he reached the edge of the jungle. Here he halted, for he felt that he could not continue his journey by day without danger of discovery. He threw himself down on the ground. The events of the last few hours had completely exhausted him, and he now discovered that he had lost his bag of provisions; probably he had left them where the tiger had attacked him. This was a great misfortune, for he had still, he calculated, at least thirty miles to pass before he reached Tientsin, and he might be kept some time outside that place before he could enter it. He waited until late in the afternoon, and then he felt that he must have some food. He therefore started again on his journey, and at last, after hesitating several times, determined to risk everything. He recharged his revolvers, and, waiting till night had quite fallen, made his way into the nearest village.

He congratulated himself more than ever that he was able to speak Chinese, and he knew that the dialect differed so much in various parts of the country that although the peasants might see that he was not a native of their district, they would not guess that he was other than a Chinaman. He therefore entered a house where a light was burning, and

said: "I am sorely in need of feed. Will you sell me some?"

The occupants of the cottage were an old man and an old woman. At his words they both looked up in some surprise.

"Where do you come from?" the woman asked.

"I come from the north," he said, "and am the bearer of a message to our general at Tientsin. I have travelled a long way and am hungry."

"Are you a Boxer?" the old man asked.

"No," he replied. "My letter is from the Empress."

"Well, well," the old man said, "it makes no difference to us. Did you see any Boxers on this side of the river as you came along?"

"No," said Rex, "they were on the other side."

The old man heaved a sigh of relief.

"They are terrible people," he said, "and though they fight against the white devils they plunder and kill us poor villagers, who have nothing to do with the affair."

"They act badly," Rex said; "and it is because I know that they kill before questioning that I am travelling on this side of the river."

"You do well," the peasant said. "It is true that they have no mercy. We have now in the village several who have barely escaped with their lives from them by swimming across the river. They have told us terrible tales of their doings. But you are hungry; my wife will cook you some rice."

"Do you mind shutting the door?" Rex asked. "There might be someone in the village who, wishing to curry favour with the Boxers, might go and bring some of them over if he saw a stranger here."

"I will do so," the old man said, suiting the action to the

word; "for although I think that there is none in the village who would do so treacherous an act, yet it is as well to take precautions."

The old woman set some rice to boil over a small fire, while the old man chatted with Rex. In twenty minutes the rice was ready, and, sitting down, he made a hearty meal, congratulating himself that during his journey with the girls he had learned to eat with chopsticks.

He had just finished when the door opened and a man wearing the badge of the Boxers entered the room.

"Bring out what food you have!" the fellow said roughly; "all of it. There are many of us in the village; it is of no use making resistance. We want to eat ourselves and to carry all there is here back to our comrades. Who is this? a son of yours?"

"No," the old man said, "he is a stranger, and bears a message from the Empress for your general at Tientsin."

"Let me see it!" the man demanded. "It is strange that you should come round this way, instead of going straight."

"My message is to the general," Rex said, "and I give it to no one else."

"But how are we to know that your story is true?" the Boxer said. "This is not the way that a messenger from the Empress would come, and if she sent one it would not be by a fellow like you. Empresses do not entrust their messages to peasants. I believe you are a spy from the white devils at Pekin."

"I can't help what you believe," Rex said quietly, "nor do I mean to quarrel with you. I will therefore say to you, leave me alone and I will leave you alone."

"Message or no message," the Boxer said, "I will soon satisfy myself." And he drew his sword.

Rex listened a moment through the open door. He could hear a great din and commotion; muskets were being discharged, and flames were bursting out from among the cottages. Feeling, therefore, that the sound of a pistol would hardly attract atention, he raised his weapon as the Boxer rushed at him, and shot the man through the head.

The old peasant wrung his hands.

"They will kill us all!" he cried; "they will show us no mercy!"

"Quick! Help me to carry the body out at the back door, and to lay it down by the wall. The body will not be noticed there. Then I advise you and your wife to fly at once and hide in the jungle a few hundred yards away. There is no fear of their finding you, and in the morning you can come out again, if, as is most likely, they have gone."

The old man seized the dead Boxer by the legs, while Rex took him by the head, and together they removed him from the house. Then the old couple hurried away, after Rex had thrust some money into the man's hand.

"That will go far to build up your cottage again," he said; "but it is hardly likely that they will burn it when they find it empty."

So saying he turned away and continued his journey. He had gone but a couple of miles when he came suddenly upon a group of peasants, who were anxiously watching a light in the sky.

"Who are you?" they shouted as they seized him.

"I am a stranger in these parts; I am on my way down from Pekin," he said; "but I have come to warn you that the Boxers are near at hand."

"That is a pretty tale," one of them said derisively. "There is no doubt that you are a spy of the Boxers come on in advance to know whether our village is worth plundering.

Besides, we know that the Boxers have not yet crossed the river."

"I can assure you that they have. That light you see there comes from the village three miles away. They have plundered it and set it on fire."

"A nice story!" the spokesman of the party said. "How then did you get away to give us word if you were not sent forward as a spy?"

"I was staying there overnight," he said, "and while I was eating my supper the village was attacked, and I fled."

"That will not do, my fine fellow. There is no doubt that you are a Boxer spy, and at least one of the cursed band shall die. Haul him along, fellows!"

The men dragged Rex to the village, which was but a hundred yards away. There he was tied to a post while the villagers debated what death he should die. It was not pleasant to Rex to hear the details of his execution discussed, each one more horrible than another. They finally decided to burn him alive, and were bringing the faggots out of their houses for the purpose, when a sound of shouting and the clashing of weapons was borne towards them on the quiet night air.

"Listen!" he shouted, "the Boxers are coming."

Everyone stood for a moment as still as a statue. Then a wild cry arose of "The Boxers! the Boxers!" and in an instant all Rex's persecutors had fled, each to snatch some prized valuable in his house, and to fly before the Boxers arrived. As soon as they had left him, Rex struggled to free himself from his bonds. Fortunately the cords had not been tightly fastened, and after a prolonged and desperate effort he freed one hand; the rest was comparatively easy, and just as the Boxers were entering the village he tore himself free.

He ran at the top of his speed till he felt that he was safe, and then he threw himself down exhausted.

"I have had a hard day of it indeed," he said; "once mauled by a tiger, and three times nearly taken by the Boxers. If I get through this safely, I am not likely to leave Tientsin again until I come up with the relieving army. I have had more narrow escapes to-day than I have had in all my life, and I have no wish for a repetition of them. I am not sure if I do not prefer a tiger to these fanatical Boxers."

After lying for fully half an hour, he got up and continued his way towards Tientsin. The rest of the journey was uneventful. At the appointed spot he met Ah Lo, who had managed to get down without adventure. After mutual congratulations, they made a hearty meal off some provisions which Ah Lo had been fortunate enough to get at the house of an old friend, Rex the while recounting his experiences. When they had finished, they cautiously approached the town.

Working down to the east, they saw that heavy firing was going on from a large building which had been the Chinese military college, and in other parts of the town. The military college showed signs of having been heavily cannonaded.

"It is evident," said Rex, "that our fellows have taken that place, and that the Chinese are attacking it. We must wait till night, and then try and make our way in. I hope that the place is held by British troops, for if it is occupied by troops who don't understand English, we are likely to be shot as we approach it."

Accordingly they lay down at the edge of a patch of high corn.

"At present," said Rex, "our men are taking the offensive;

the firing on the other side of the river is on the outside of the settlement. Admiral Seymour's force can't have retired beyond Tientsin; they must be holding the place, for certainly the local Europeans would not have been strong enough to make a sortie, or to have captured that Chinese college. It is either that or else troops must have come up from Taku."

The truth was that fifteen hundred Russians had arrived after Admiral Seymour's force had started. It was fortunate indeed that they had not arrived in time to join it, for if they had, Tientsin could not have made a successful resistance.

All day the firing went on. Where they lay they could see that not only Boxers, but regular Chinese troops, were taking part in the attack. Several times the enemy made rushes almost up to the college, but each time they quailed before the heavy fire and turned back. At nightfall the fighting ceased, and Rex and his companion left their hiding-place and made their way round to the river below the military college, on which side no attack had been made. Groups of men were sitting about talking together, but by exercising great caution they succeeded in avoiding these, and at last approached the college. When they got nearer, Rex shouted: "I am an Englishman with messages from Pekin; don't fire!"

"All right, mate!" came back in a hearty voice. "But you must just stop where you are until I call an officer."

A minute later, a voice shouted: "How many are there of you?"

"Only myself and one servant."

"All right! come on. As an Englishman you must be a friend."

A couple of minutes later Rex and Ah Lo entered the

college. An officer with two men and a lantern met them.

"You may be an Englishman," the officer said, "but you look very unlike one."

"If I hadn't disguised myself I should not have got down here," Rex said with a laugh. "My name is Bateman. I am the son of a merchant here. I went up with Admiral Seymour's expedition, but left them when they came to a stand-still, and made my way into Pekin, where I have some relations."

"Are they holding out all right?" the officer asked eagerly. "No news has come down for the past ten days. Isn't Seymour there?"

"No. I am sorry to say he is not. Hasn't he got back here?"

"No. We have not heard of him since he started."

"That is bad news indeed. He was getting very short of provisions when I left him. We heard firing as we came down to-day, some ten miles out. I know that there is a big Chinese arsenal out there. I only hope he has taken that and is defending himself."

"And Pekin is safe still?"

"Yes. We have been fighting hard for the past three weeks, and the garrison can hold out for some time longer; but the Chinese are gradually gaining ground. The French Legation is nearly destroyed, so is the American, and the Russian is a good deal damaged. I hope, however, that fighting has stopped for the present. If it goes on again all will have to take to the British settlement. Now, how can I get across?"

"Well, you can't get to the bridge now. Your only plan is to take a native boat—several of them are lying on the shore—and row across. We are going to blow up this place

to-night, and level it to the ground; the men are all at work mining it. We only took it because it commands more or less all the streets running from the water. When we have levelled it we shall probably return again to the other side. Of course before going we shall also burn down all the Chinese houses on this side of the river."

CHAPTER XI

THE FIGHT AT TIENTSIN

REX crossed the river with Ah Lo, and made his way to Mr. Bateman's. He was received with delight, and both father and mother showered questions upon him as to the state of things in Pekin.

"There has been a lot of miscellaneous fighting," he said, "but the Chinese have not made many determined assaults, and in all cases have been readily beaten off. The attacks are slackening off now, I think the Chinese are getting pretty sick of it. When I left the garrison the girls were quite well. They are working as assistants to the lady who undertakes the cooking for the hospitals, and they therefore get, I think, rather better food than most people. At any rate they look very well, and I do think that the siege has been good for them, for they have not had time to mope over the death of their father and mother, as they would have done had I brought them down here. When it is all over, that horrible business will seem to them an age back. Indeed it seems so to me already. I can hardly believe that it is not much more than three weeks since I got them out.

"Now, Father, how have you been getting on here?"

"Well, the fighting only began two days ago, but it has been pretty hot since then. Everyone who can carry a gun has been taking part in the defence. We have barricaded the ends of all the streets, but I don't think we could have held out long if it hadn't been for the Russians, who came

up after Seymour left. By the way, what is the news of him? We expected to hear ten days ago of his arrival at Pekin."

"He never got up there, Father. I told you that I thought he wouldn't. When they started they only took with them provisions for six days, and as the railway was everywhere pulled up, they had difficulty in taking even that with them. I don't know how far they got, but it was certainly nowhere near Pekin. I believe they are now besieged at the arsenal, eight miles out. We heard heavy firing in that direction when we came along last night. Of course we had no idea then as to what it was, but I have no doubt whatever now. I must go at once and tell whoever is in command."

"The Russian Colonel is at the head of affairs in virtue both of seniority of rank, and of being in command of the strongest force here. I don't think he knows English, but he speaks French. I will ask Thompson, who I know speaks that language fluently, to accompany me to his house with you and act as interpreter. We expect some more troops up to-morrow, and I have no doubt that, as soon as he has given our assailants here a good thrashing, he will send out a relief party to Seymour."

Mr. Thompson readily agreed to accompany them, and they proceeded together to the house of Colonel Wogack, the senior officer in Tientsin. When they sent in word that a messenger had arrived from Pekin they were at once admitted. The colonel had just finished dinner. He had with him Colonel Anisimoff and Lieutenant-Colonel Shirinsky. Rex had changed his clothes before starting, and Mr. Thompson introduced him to the general as a gentleman who had just made his way down from Pekin.

"What is the news, sir?" the colonel asked in French.

Rex related the state of affairs in the Legations.

"This is much better than we had hoped," the colonel said

warmly. "We have been in the greatest anxiety about the position, and several rumours have reached us that the Legations had fallen. Are you the bearer of the message for me from the Ministers?"

"No, sir, I came down in disguise, and had I been seized and searched, any paper of that kind would have ensured my death. Sir Claude Macdonald, however, bade me give a full account of the position and of the fighting so far, and assure you that, although provisions were beginning to run short, they could maintain themselves for some time yet."

"Have you heard anything, sir, about the relieving force?"

"I went up with them, but left them at Fantail and made my way into Pekin, bringing them the only news that they had received of the column. But, sir, on my way down I heard heavy firing in the direction of the Hsi-Ku arsenal. The only explanation of this that occurs to me is that the arsenal has been captured by Admiral Seymour, and that he is besieged there."

"Why do you not think that he may be besieging it?" the colonel said sharply.

"Because, sir, they only had three days' provisions when I left them, and must have been in a state of starvation when they arrived at the arsenal. Admiral Seymour would therefore attack it for the sake of the stores it contained, and as he would no doubt lose heavily, he would not be in a position to cut his way down here."

"Very well reasoned, sir. As soon as we can spare a force from here, we will go out to relieve him. Now, will you kindly give me a full detailed account of the fighting at Pekin and the state of the resources there?"

"May I ask if you speak Chinese, Colonel?"

"Certainly. I have resided for some years in Pekin."

"Then in that case, sir," Rex said, "I shall tell you in that

language, as the story is a long one, and it will be tedious to translate it sentence by sentence."

"It would certainly be more convenient," the colonel said.

Rex then told the story at length. He was saved much time in explaining the nature of the defences from the colonel's knowledge of the ground. The Russian officer made several comments here and there.

"Why did they not hold the customs-house?" he asked. "It was a strong building and but a short distance from the Fu."

"Yes, sir, but I believe that it was considered that the force was barely sufficient to hold the Legation. Indeed, the occupation of the Fu was to some extent an afterthought, and it was necessitated by the great number of the Christian Chinese who came in for shelter, and for whom it was absolutely impossible to provide in the Legations. It was for the same reason that the Austrian, Italian, and Dutch Legations and the Pekin Club were abandoned. A portion of the French Legation has been destroyed, also part of the Fu."

Then he related the incidents of each day's fighting.

"Was our bank held as well as our Legation?" the Russian asked.

"Yes. The line of defence went round the back and side of your Legation and the Russian Bank to the Tartar wall. On the other side it did not reach the Tartar wall."

The narration occupied more than an hour. At the end, Colonel Wogack thanked Rex very warmly for his information.

"It is all most valuable, and especially that part relating to Admiral Seymour's expedition. I hope we shall get some more messengers through to Pekin, for it is clear that up to the time you left, the Chinese were gradually gaining ground.

They have abundance of artillery, and if they were to bring it into play they could breach the walls and defences in half a dozen places in the course of twelve hours. What you tell me of your visit to Prince Ching affords a certain amount of hope, but there is never any depending on Chinamen. To-morrow the other party may get the upper hand again and fighting go on more earnestly than ever. Matters here have become much more serious in the course of the past day or so. Until the Taku forts were taken the Chinese regular troops held aloof from the Boxers, but now the Chinese regular troops have joined the Boxers, and we are likely to have hot work of it."

On their way home Rex told his father what the colonel had said.

"Yes," he said. "In the opinion of a good many men the summons to those fortresses to surrender was a mistake. Up till that time the affair might have been considered as an insurrection; indeed, the Chinese troops several times fought the Boxers, but the attack on the Taku Forts was considered by the Chinese as a declaration of war on the part of the Powers. I don't say that there is not a great deal to be said both ways. There was always the danger that the Chinese would unite against us, especially as the Empress openly upheld the Boxers. In that case it is certain that the available force on board the ships would not have sufficed to fight their way up here, and consequently Tientsin must have fallen, and Pekin also. It was therefore a most difficult question to decide. Our attack on the Taku Forts certainly had the effect of uniting the Chinese against us, but had that attack not been made, or had it been delayed, we should probably have had all the Chinese against us, with an inadequate force to oppose them, and Tientsin and Pekin would have been lost, and the life of every European in them sacrificed.

"Come in, Mr. Thompson. We must get Rex to go over his narrative for our benefit. It need not be so full as that which he gave to the colonel, in the first place because we don't know the position of all the Legations, so that details would be lost on us; in the next place, because it is getting late, and Rex has already had a long day of it."

It was not, however, till past midnight that Rex finished and they turned into bed. They were awakened an hour later by a series of loud explosions, which told that the sailors were engaged in blowing up the military college. In the morning Rex learned more of what had taken place. The Boxers had set fire to several places in the native city, and to the railway-station. They were beaten off, and a train was despatched to Tong-Ku, filled with women and children; the rest were ordered to take shelter in the Gordon Hall, the large municipal building in the British section.

The next night the Boxers renewed the attack on the railway-station, but were again repulsed. On the following day they were joined by the Chinese troops, and from that time all communication with the Taku was cut off. That day the Military College was taken.

An incessant fusillade was going on when Rex awoke somewhat late the next morning. He dressed hastily and hurried down-stairs.

"What is up, Father? Are they attacking us again?"

"They have occupied the college that we blew up last night, and are now keeping up a heavy fire from that shelter. When it gets dark we are all going to barricade the ends of the streets, as it would be impossible for us to move out of our houses during the day. The municipality have already met this morning, and it has been decided that all goods in the store-houses, with the exception of the valuable ones, shall be given up for the purpose. Fortunately there is a great

quantity of sacks of wool and rice, both of which will do admirably for the purpose. The greater part of the volunteers are occupied in the houses at the end of the street, where they answer the fire of the enemy; but the Chinese never show themselves. Did you notice the state of the river as you crossed it last night?"

"No, Father."

"It was just as well that you didn't, my boy, for it is full of corpses. Some thousands of Chinese must have been massacred in the native city, all of them no doubt people who are supposed to be favourable to us—coolies employed here and their relations, shopkeepers who have supplied us with small necessaries, and perhaps some of the better class who have ventured opinions hostile to the Boxers. It is a horrible business, lad, and the troops are so furious at the sight that they may give little quarter when the tables are turned and we take the town. That is the worst of a war in this country; the Chinese never give quarter, and as a result little is given on our side. Our men may possibly be kept in hand, but I doubt whether the Russians, or the Germans, or the French will be restrained."

Rex at once put on his uniform, took his rifle, and joined the party who, behind some hastily-thrown-up barricades, were trying to keep down the Chinese fire. With that exception the day was comparatively quiet. All the Europeans not engaged in combating the Chinese fire were employed with the sailors and marines in erecting barricades, while the Russians held the outposts.

The next morning the Chinese opened fire with two field-guns posted on the railway embankment opposite to the British section. Commander Beattie, of the *Barfleur,* with three companies of sailors, was sent across the river to try to silence them; but the Chinese, sheltered behind the mud walls

which intersected the ground in every direction, poured in so heavy a fire that the attempt had to be abandoned, Commander Beattie and three of his officers being wounded. A nine-pounder gun was then brought up to the river bank front under the command of Lieutenant Wright, of the *Orlando*. This opened fire upon the two Chinese guns, and maintained it so rapidly, and with such excellent aim, that the Chinese guns were withdrawn. Lieutenant Wright, however, was mortally wounded by a bursting shell.

Most of the Chinese guns were placed in the yamen fort, forty-five of them being in position there. There was also a battery of seven guns in the canal, two miles from the railway-station, a couple of guns within a thousand yards of it, and another couple behind the ruins of the Military College. Besides these there were several sand-bag batteries along the bank of the river between the French settlements and the native city, in the city wall, and in the arsenal. All these now opened fire, and from their different positions were able to cannonade the settlements from every direction.

The din was incessant, and many of the houses speedily became ruins. Unfortunately the besieged had but a few guns to meet it, having only seven twelve-pounder Russian guns of an obsolete pattern, a new fifteen-pounder, a Maxim, and a Nordenfeldt, which had just arrived, but which was of little use, as there were very few rounds of ammunition to fit it.

For a week the position was grave in the extreme; the defending force was constantly engaged, and the enemy swarmed round them; but though they made numerous demonstrations they never attempted anything like a determined attack. In one attack the enemy set fire to the buildings in fourteen places, burnt down the Roman Catholic cathedral and the greater portion of the French station, and nearly

succeeded in capturing the railway-station, which was held by the Russians.

Day by day the situation became more serious. There had been no communication with the coast for nearly ten days; the enemy daily became more daring, and their attacks were repulsed with ever-increasing difficulty. Then one of the volunteers, Mr. Watts, offered to ride through the Chinese lines by night. He knew the country well, and believed he could get through; but the service was a desperate one. The Russian general gave him two Cossacks as an escort. These might be of use if he fell in with a very small party of the enemy; but as he could not speak their language they could be of little other service. His comrades gave him a hearty farewell when he left, never expecting to see him again. Nevertheless, almost by a miracle, he succeeded in getting through, and carrying news to the fleet that the position at Tientsin was becoming desperate, that they maintained themselves with the greatest difficulty, and that their ammunition was fast giving out.

No time was lost; two thousand men—British, Americans, and Russians—bringing with them two Russian batteries, each of six fifteen-pounder Krupps, were at once landed. The Russians were commanded by General Stössel, the Americans by Major Waller, and the naval brigade by Commander Craddock and Captain Mullins. The force also included four hundred Welsh Fusiliers under Major Morris, and a portion of the Chinese regiment from Wei-Hai-Wei under Lieutenant-Colonel Bowyer.

It was a terrible journey. The railway had been completely destroyed, the heat was overpowering, and the enemy, though they did not venture to make an open attack, kept up a constant fire upon them. Nevertheless they toiled on unflinchingly, and at last reached Tientsin, to the delight of the

inhabitants, who now found themselves in a position to defy any attack.

Rex had been continually at one or another of the barricades. The fire from two guns concealed among some houses had been particularly galling and accurate, and Rex, with two of his comrades, had often talked over the possibility of silencing it. On the twenty-second Rex said: "Well, I mean to go out to-night and see if I cannot stop the fire of that gun. Are you two fellows disposed to go with me?"

"Certainly, if you think there is a shadow of a chance."

"I think that there is a very good chance. You see, the Chinese guns always stop fire between ten at night and four in the morning. It is true that sniping goes on all night, showing that there are skirmishers out all that time; but if we could pass through these we are safe, for there is no doubt that the artillerymen serving the guns lie down and go to sleep. I have a Chinese disguise, and, talking the language as I do, I feel sure that I can get through. I shall take my man Ah Lo with me. Two might be quite enough if it were not that the gunners probably lie down close to their pieces, and if they woke up before we had driven both spikes in and made a rush, we might fail in our object. For that reason I should like to have two more if you are willing to come."

Both the young men expressed their willingness to go, one of them saying, however, that neither of them spoke Chinese well enough to pass.

"That does not matter," Rex replied. "It would, of course, be better for us to go through in two parties and join when we have passed the skirmishing-line. Ah Lo can go with one of you and I can go with the other, so that if we are stopped and questioned we can do the talking."

"Yes, that will make it all right," the other said. "There

is no difficulty about disguises; there are still some coolies here. Now, what ought we to take?"

"We must each take a heavy hammer and a spike, also a thick felt wad to put on the top of the nail when we strike it, so that we can practically spike the guns without making a noise. In addition we had better each take a brace of revolvers and a sword, so that we can make a pretty tough fight should we be attacked. Still, if we are discovered after we have finished our work, we must take to our heels rather than to our arms. In that case I think it would be wise, instead of making at once for the camp, to run to one of the houses. The night will be dark, and in the confusion the Chinese will not at first realize what has happened, and before they recover we shall probably be out of sight. If we get a good start there is little fear that we shall be overtaken, and even if we should come upon skirmishers they are sure to be very scattered. We can shoot them down before they realize who we are and what we have been up to, and then there will only be a short run and the risk of a chance bullet before we are safe behind the barricade."

"Well, it all seems plain enough, and I really don't see why it could not be managed."

"I have no doubt in the least that it could be managed," Rex said confidently. "There are only two real difficulties; the one is, to make our way through their skirmishers without being detected, the other is to find the guns in the dark."

"Yes, that will be a serious difficulty. One of those Chinese houses is just like another, and as the guns are a good thousand yards away, the chances are that we should not find them."

"We can manage that," Rex said, after a moment's thought. "To-day we will put a lantern on the barricade, and ask the middy in charge to let it remain there, telling

him what we want it for. Then we will go back fifty or a hundred yards and place another lantern in a window in such a position that when we are going in a direct line for the guns the light of the first shall cover that of the second."

"That is a splendid idea, Bateman; that will certainly get over the difficulty. You are a wonderful chap to plan things. Well, I feel sure now that we shall succeed if only we can make our way through those sniping beggars."

The lanterns were obtained, and Rex went with them to the barricades. The officer in command there was a midshipman of the *Orlando*. Rex had had several chats with him during the past few days. "Hillo, Bateman," he said, "what are you up to with those lanterns at this hour? Going to look for a subterranean mine?"

"No, I will tell you what I am going to do, but you must keep it a secret; all sorts of objections might be raised, and the enemy would get to know what we were up to."

"You can trust me."

"Well, then, we are going out to-night to spike those two guns over there that have been doing so much mischief for the past two days."

"You are! By Jove! I should like to go with you, but of course I can't. I have got to stick here whatever happens till the thing is over. How are you going to do it?"

"Four of us are going out. There is no doubt the fellows who work the guns all go to sleep between ten and four, so we have a fair chance to go up and spike the guns before they wake. Of course the difficulty will be to get through those fellows who keep watch all night. For that we have to trust to chance. We shall carry pistols, and if we come across one or two men we can use them without attracting attention, as anyone who heard the shots would naturally think that some of their own men were sniping."

"That seems good enough," the middy said; "but what on earth have you got the lantern for? Do you mean to march out with it to show the way?"

"Not exactly," Rex laughed. He then explained their plan to the middy.

"First-rate, a jolly good idea!" said his friend. "The guns are somewhere along those ruins over there; they fire every three or four minutes. Just at present, as far as I can make out, they are pounding the French settlement. I should think the line would be somewhere about that house fifty yards behind."

"I will go and stand there," Rex said, "and watch for the next shot. It is most important to get the lanterns in the exact line, because if we once got among those houses in the dark we might search for half an hour before we found the position, and likely enough might fall over some of the sleeping Boxers."

"They are not Boxers," the midshipman said, "they are regular troops. Those guns are Krupps, and the Boxers have no guns of that sort. I will go back with you. Two eyes are better than one; there is only the flash to guide us, for they are using smokeless powder."

They went back to the point that he had suggested, and stood looking earnestly till they saw the flash. Both agreed that they were five or six yards too much to the left. They accordingly moved a little in that direction. Five minutes after they saw another flash.

"This is just about right," Rex said; "there is a window just overhead. The house looks to me as if it were empty; at any rate I will go in and see."

It turned out to be as he thought.

"All right! I will leave the lantern in the house and light it as we come along, which will be about twelve o'clock. I

shall be glad if you will keep your eye upon both lights and see that they burn steadily. Probably they will not require attention, but at the same time, as the success of the job depends upon both keeping alight, it is as well to run no risks. There is, perhaps, more fear of the one on the barricade coming to grief than of this. One of your sailors might topple it over."

"You needn't be afraid of that. I will put a man to sit by the side of it, or rather to sit down behind it in shelter, for the bullets whistle pretty close over that point sometimes."

"It would be a very good plan," Rex said, "if you would get him to put his hat in front of it and take it away again about every quarter of a minute, so as to make the light twinkle. You see there are a good many lights in the houses at night, and at a distance we might easily make a mistake; but if this one were to be kept flashing we could hardly go wrong."

"A good idea again, Bateman! I shall see that that is done. Is there anything else?"

"Well, I think that after we have been gone five minutes it would be an advantage if you would make your men fire half a dozen shots. Those snipers would be sure to answer at once, and we should then get some idea of their situation and probably be able to avoid them."

"That shall be done," said the middy. "The danger will, of course, be in spiking the guns."

"That is so, but we shall all be in disguise, so that if we stumble over any of them in the dark we shall only be taken for some of their own fellows. We shall each carry hammers and spikes, and felt wads an inch thick, so that when we find the guns we shall be able to spike them without making any noise."

"Do you know the mechanism of those Krupp guns?"

"No."

"Well, then, you would only be going out on a fool's errand. You would not be able to spike them, and if you did, they would have no difficulty in cutting the spike off by taking the breech-block out. Your best plan would be to get the breech-blocks out and carry them away. They would probably be too heavy to carry far, but if you were to get them out and take them a short distance away, you might hide them among the ruins and cover them over with rubbish. That would effectually put them out of action until we go out and capture the place. Look here! have you got a pocket-book with you?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I can show you roughly the action of the gun and how to open the breech and get the block out. When you grasp that you will find no difficulty in doing it, if you coach the fellows who are going with you how it is done. You see the action would be quite noiseless, and though it would take you a good bit longer than spiking, that would not be very important if you find all the fellows asleep."

"Thank you! I am very much obliged to you. It would have been a horrible sell to find, when we got there, that after all we could do nothing."

They went together to the barricade and sat down in as comfortable a spot as they could find. Then the midshipman drew a plan of the breech action and explained minutely to Rex how it worked and how he should proceed to get out the wedge and stopper. In the evening, when the others came off duty, Rex brought them home, and, taking them up into his room, explained to them what was to be done. He knew that it was useless to attempt to get Ah Lo to understand it, but he would only have to put his hand on the part to be operated upon, and get Ah Lo to apply his strength to it.

"Even if we can't get out the breech-block, or find it too heavy to carry away, it would be sufficient, I should say, to take out the wedge and stopper, and carry them off, for I doubt whether they would be able to replace these parts, and at any rate they could only do so after several days' delay, which would be a good deal gained."

At a quarter to twelve Rex and Ah Lo set out, and on arriving at the barricade found their two companions already there. The lanterns were lighted, and they at once set out. They advanced until they judged that they were near the line of snipers, and then lay down. They had scarcely done so when the defenders of the barrier opened fire, and directly afterwards, as Rex had expected, the Chinese ahead replied. The shots were all pretty close together, which seemed to show that the Chinese there were in a group. Rex and his companions immediately set off again, and, after proceeding about a hundred yards to the right, again went forward. All had muffled their shoes with strips of blanket before starting, and, treading very cautiously to avoid stumbling against stones or other obstacles, they went quietly forward, holding their pistols in readiness for action, and stooping low.

They met with no interruption. The party on the left were still firing, and they found no one ahead of them. Gradually they moved towards the left until the Chinese snipers were behind them and they had the two lanterns in line. They went on faster now till they knew that they must be near the houses, for the night was so dark that they could not even see the outline. Looking frequently back to be sure that they were keeping the exact line, they proceeded steadily and at last came upon a wall, evidently the remains of a house. From this point they moved forward foot by foot until they felt that they were far enough among the ruins; then they scattered a little until, to their delight, they

came upon the guns. Listening intently they could hear the sound of heavy breathing and snoring a short distance ahead, and judged that the Chinese must be lying but fifteen yards away. They drew together round one of the guns and felt the breech.

"Here is the handle of the lever," Rex whispered.

Opening the breech they took out the wedge and stopper, and then moved to the other gun and completed the operation. They had finished it and were moving off when one of them stumbled and fell. A Chinaman, startled by the sound, exclaimed: "Who is there; what are you doing?" Making no reply, however, they hurried on, and making two or three turns among the ruins were soon in the open again.

"Keep along still farther to the left," Rex said, as there was a sudden shout behind. "Evidently the wakeful Chinaman has got up to investigate the cause of the disturbance, and has discovered that the guns have been tampered with."

As he spoke a chorus of yells came from the direction of the guns.

"Look here!" Rex said, "here is a pile of earth where a wall has fallen. Let's shove these things in here and cover them up; they are precious heavy, and we can't do any fighting until we have got rid of them."

The suggestion was no sooner made than it was carried out. Kneeling down they rapidly scraped a hole in the debris, and carefully hid the portions of the guns which they had carried off. As they did so they could hear a rush of shouting men behind them.

"We had better follow them," Rex said. "No doubt they will scatter along the line, and we shall then have a good chance of getting through." Accordingly they retraced their steps and joined their pursuers. The mob of Chinamen scattered as they advanced, and halted to make enquiries

when they reached the sniping line. As the men here declared that no one had passed them, the great bulk went on to the right or left. Rex whispered to Ah Lo, who exclaimed: "They may have run on; we will see if we can't overtake them!" and with his companions passed on at a run.

It was straight sailing now; the guiding lantern was in front of them, and at the top of their speed they ran down towards it. They were challenged as they approached the barricade, for the Chinese had opened a heavy random fire.

"All right!" Rex shouted, "don't fire, whatever you do."

A minute later he and his companions climbed the barricade.

"Well, have you succeeded?" the midshipman asked.

"Yes, thanks to your advice, we have disabled the guns. We have not brought the pieces with us, but we have buried them in the ruins where they are certainly not likely to be discovered."

"No fighting?"

"No, we have not had to draw a trigger."

"Well done! I heard a terrible din right out in that direction, and feared that you had been captured."

"No, we had done the business before they got the alarm, and were able to make off without being seen. Then we joined them and rushed in pursuit of ourselves; but when they scattered in all directions we kept straight on, shouting that we should overtake the fugitives."

"Well, you have done a first-rate job, and as a result we shall have a comparatively quiet time to-morrow, for their shot generally struck near us. Shall I report the affair?"

"No," Rex said. "We have agreed that we will say nothing about it. We might get a blowing-up for acting without orders. We don't want praise, and are well satisfied to have silenced those troublesome guns."

They went quietly back to their homes, and next day had the pleasure of hearing remarks of surprise and satisfaction at the silence of the two guns that had been so troublesome.

That morning a relief force, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Shirinsky, sallied out to the assistance of Admiral Seymour, and the day passed in comparative quietness at Tientsin, the time being employed by the troops and inhabitants in strengthening the barricades. The Chinese, who were of course aware of the large reinforcements that had arrived on the previous day, and were probably anticipating an attack, remained inactive. Only a few shots were fired into the settlements during the day.

Having nothing else to do Rex wandered all over the settlements, and was surprised to see the enormous damage that had been effected by the Chinese guns. The French settlement had been almost entirely destroyed by fire and shot, the damage greatly exceeding that which had been inflicted on the British settlement. Many of the houses had suffered terribly. The municipal buildings had been struck many times, but, being solidly built, had suffered only from the heavier missiles. Houses facing the river were all riddled with musket balls, and many had been badly knocked about by the Chinese guns on the opposite side. The loss of life, however, had been particularly small, and the inhabitants, feeling that the worst was over, congratulated themselves that it had not been more serious.

Rex learned that the heaviest fighting had taken place round the railway-station. This point was guarded jointly by a force of Japanese, French, and British, the Japanese and French being stationed on the platform and in the station buildings, while the British, with a Maxim, held the engine-house. The fighting lasted day and night for several

days in succession, the enemy making the engine-house the special object of their attack, and endeavouring to silence the Maxim by planting two nine-pounders in a clump of trees less than twelve hundred yards away. Their fire was so accurate that the men who were not working the gun had to lie down in the ash-pit between the rails, planks being placed across the opening to give them protection. One day the Chinese put eight shells into the wall within a space of twenty feet, killing and wounding seventeen of the Welsh Fusiliers, who were at that time on guard.

The French and Japanese erected sand-bag barricades along the platform, and, lying down on the rails behind, fired through loopholes. Once or twice the fighting was so close as to be nearly hand-to-hand. Between the station and the Russian camp was an undefended gap of a quarter of a mile, studded thickly with Chinese graves, which afforded excellent cover, and enabled the Boxers to advance to within a short distance of the station. One night, indeed, a number of Boxers managed to creep up unseen, getting behind some empty trucks standing by the siding, cut off the French in the station, and the British in the engine-house. It was a moment of great peril, but fortunately some Sikhs of the Hong-Kong regiment, who were coming out to relieve the blue-jackets and marines, saw the situation, and attacked the enemy. A fierce fight, lasting some three hours, ensued, the Sikhs showing the greatest courage and presence of mind, and the assailants were in the end driven off with heavy loss. The allies, however, also suffered heavily; their casualties, which occurred chiefly among the French and Japanese, amounting to nearly a hundred and fifty. The Boxers, who had been armed with rifles from the arsenal, also showed great courage, many times sallying out from between the trucks and charging with fixed bayonets, a weapon of whose

use they knew so little that those on a number of the rifles picked up after the fight were still fixed in the scabbards.

The British Club had been turned into a hospital at first, but it was found to be a great deal too exposed in position, and the wounded were removed into the Gordon Hall, where they were comparatively safe. The hospitals were excellently managed, and the wounded bore all their sufferings without complaint, although terribly harassed by the flies and afflicted by the great heat. The continual bursting of shells also troubled them greatly; the explosion was serious enough to men in sound health, and it was, of course, much more trying to those who were shaken by loss of blood and had their nerves much less under control.

The French priests behaved with great courage and humanity, feeding and protecting all the Christian Chinese who came to them, Catholic and Protestant alike. Many of the Chinese women were housed in the missions, and private firms sheltered numbers of them in their warehouses; but nevertheless the Chinese Christians suffered heavily, as their houses stood for the most part in exposed positions. When Rex was off duty as a volunteer he spent the greater part of his time in visiting these poor people, carrying rice and other necessities from his father's storehouses. He was surprised at their patience and resignation: they evinced the most touching gratitude for the welcome supplies that he brought them. The rice was generally cooked for them in the house, and Ah Lo always accompanied Rex with two pails full of the food, while Rex carried the smaller comforts in a basket.

CHAPTER XII

DELAYS

ON the thirteenth the allies began a heavy bombardment of the native city, the guns being placed on a mud wall enclosing both the native city and foreign settlements. The British had sixteen guns of various sizes, and four Maxims; the Americans three guns and three machine-guns; the Japanese twelve mountain guns; the French six mountain guns; and the Austrians two Maxims and a Nordenfeldt. The Russians and Germans, who were encamped two miles away on the other side of the river, did not share in the bombardment. The cannonade was kept up with tremendous vigour, the British guns alone pouring in fifteen hundred shells in the course of the morning. So terrific was the fire that the Chinese batteries soon ceased to play.

Meanwhile an allied army of some five thousand men, under the command of the Japanese Brigadier-General Fukushima, the senior officer present, advanced under cover of darkness on the western side of the Peiho to a little arsenal about two miles to the north-west of the settlements. This force was composed of fifteen hundred Japanese, with two batteries of artillery, a British contingent under Brigadier-General Dorward, comprising one hundred and fifty blue-jackets, one hundred and fifty marines, one hundred and sixty men of the Welsh Fusiliers, one hundred of the Chinese regiment, one hundred and fifty of the Hong-Kong regiment, the Hong-Kong artillery, and the naval guns, also forty-five

Austrian marines, nine hundred Americans under Colonel Meade, and nine hundred French under Colonel De Pelacot. The remainder of the Welsh Fusiliers and a number of blue-jackets were despatched at the same time to hold the enemy in check at the railway-station, while from their camp the Russians and Germans advanced in force on the east banks of the river to attack the batteries on the Lutai Canal. The best point of attack was the south-west angle of the city, as in this way they would have avoided the concentrated fire from the whole of the crenellated wall; but a canal intervened, and there was no means of bridging it, the Chinese having opened the sluices and flooded the country on both sides of it. The advancing force, moreover, would have been exposed to the fire of the Chinese fort two thousand yards away, on which were mounted several modern guns. It had been decided, therefore, to attack at the south gate, to which a narrow paved pathway ran in a straight line from the arsenal.

The troops were drawn up, the French on the right, the Americans on the left, and the Japanese, British, and Austrians in the centre.

The canal was formerly crossed at the arsenal by a small wooden bridge, but this had been burnt in order to keep the Chinese guns from going from the city to the race-course, from which they had for some days maintained a galling fire. The arsenal itself was not held in strength, being too much exposed to the Chinese fire, but a Maxim had been stationed in one of the houses by the bridge, to prevent the Chinese from repairing it. The French were the first to reach the remains of the bridge in order to take up their place on the right of the attacking force, and when they found that there was no means of crossing, they had to halt under cover of a very heavy fire from the Japanese sappers, until they had

made it passable. The French and Japanese troops then crossed together, and proceeded along the pathway until they reached a ditch six feet wide, running at right angles to the pathway, and filled with stagnant water.

This ditch was about nine hundred yards from the wall. Crossing it the troops took shelter in a number of small houses a short distance beyond. Forty men were left to hold them, and two hundred more advanced along the causeway until they got under the shelter of the Chinese houses, situated a couple of hundred yards outside the city wall. The Japanese sappers threw up an entrenchment with great rapidity, and placed bridges across one or two ditches which obstructed the advance.

The attack was then developed as had been arranged. The Welsh Fusiliers and the Americans on the extreme left proceeded towards the western angle of the city wall, the advance company taking cover in a creek some three hundred yards from the wall, and the remainder settling themselves a little to the rear behind mud walls and any inequalities in the ground. Their position was an unpleasant one, for in addition to being exposed to the fire from the wall, they had to keep an eye upon a large body of Chinese horse which had drawn up just out of range in readiness to charge if opportunity offered itself. Unfortunately, two hundred of the American infantry, under Colonel Liscum, instead of continuing forward, turned almost at a right angle and marched directly across the front of the attack until they reached a position near the French settlements. They were in formation of sections of four, and were exposed to a terrific rifle fire from the whole line of the city wall and also from the Chinese houses lying between the wall and the settlements. They changed their line of advance, but did not better their position, and were obliged to take shelter

behind the Chinese graves, with which the plain was studded. These graves are only small mounds of earth, and though they found protection behind them from direct fire from the walls, they were still exposed to a flanking fire from the houses. Colonel Liscum, while gallantly steadying his men, was killed, and four officers and seventy-two men were wounded.

An attempt was made to send them fresh ammunition. Captain Ollivant of the Chinese regiment was killed in a gallant attempt to draw off the line of fire with some ammunition mules, and the Americans were forced to lie where they were until nightfall, when they fell back to the arsenal with their wounded and dead, which amounted to just one-half of their whole number. In the course of the day Lieutenant Phillimore of the *Barfleur* had managed to get out to them with a few blue-jackets, and had assisted them materially, both in holding their position and in carrying back to the arsenal those who had fallen. Major Pereira of the 1st Chinese Regiment, who was next to them, went out to them twice to bring in their wounded. He was hit himself in so doing. His regiment had nineteen casualties, including two officers.

When the bombardment had somewhat weakened the Chinese fire, General Fukushima ordered the general advance. Unfortunately he received word that his men had effected a lodgment on the city wall, and had actually got inside the town, and he therefore requested General Dorward to stop the fire of the British guns, which was, of course, instantly done. Had they been kept in action half an hour longer the loss to the Japanese would have been considerably less, for the gunners had the exact range, and were causing great destruction. However, the whole line of attack pushed forward and took shelter in the houses outside the walls,

and as soon as it was discovered that the Japanese were not in the city, all the guns again opened fire. This was maintained steadily all the afternoon, the fire of the large naval guns being particularly accurate. While the Americans were being retired from their advanced position in the evening these guns were ordered to sweep the Chinese barricades and line of defended houses, from which Colonel Liscum's force had been so much harried all day. The Americans were lying about three hundred yards from this fringe, and if they attempted to move they were in great danger of bing hit, but the fire of the British guns was so accurate that the retiral was carried out without one casualty.

Early in the afternoon a company of marines was ordered to reinforce the Japanese and French, and the Austrian marines went with them. The fire was so heavy and accurate that a number of blue-jackets under Captain Beattie hurried forward to their support. A heavy cross-fire was poured upon them, and several of the men fell, among them being an able seaman named M'Carthy. Basil Guy, one of the *Barfleur's* midshipmen, ran back and bound up his wounds. He then tried to lift the disabled man and carry him in, but, finding the weight too heavy for him, he ran forward again, got the stretcher, and returned with another seaman to assist him. As the rest of the party were all now under shelter, the whole fire of the enemy was concentrated upon him, and the ground was literally ploughed up with shot. M'Carthy was placed on the stretcher, but as he was being carried in, he was again hit, and this time killed. For this gallant action Guy was awarded the Victoria Cross, being the only midshipman who had ever gained that honour.

The troops then advanced across the causeway, suffering heavily from the incessant rifle fire, and from the shell and shrapnel fire of two guns which the Chinese had posted near

BASIL GUY RAN BACK AND BOUND UP HIS WOUNDS.

a water-mill at the right of the road. The causeway was not more than thirty feet in width, so that the troops were unable to extend, and being therefore in close order, afforded an excellent mark to the enemy. Unfortunately by this time the Japanese and British guns had expended all their ammunition, but one of the Hong-Kong guns had still a few rounds left, and directing its fire upon the Chinese guns which were doing so much mischief, brought their fire on itself, and so succeeded in enabling the column to pass along the causeway with far less damage than it would otherwise have suffered. The Chinese fire was on the whole surprisingly good, and showed that their artillerymen had been well instructed. While our own guns were for the most part using black powder, the Chinese were using smokeless, and consequently it was very difficult for our artillerymen to locate their exact position.

The troops were glad enough when night came on. The day had been hot, and though heavy showers had fallen in the early part of the morning, their water-bottles were soon exhausted, and they were compelled to drink the green stagnant water in the ditches, with the result that a great number of them afterwards suffered from dysentery. The losses had been very heavy, and the question of retirement was mooted, only, however, to be at once rejected. To retire would be to add enormously to the prestige of the Chinese and to lower the spirit of the troops. It was therefore resolved that the ground won must be held at all hazards, and the attack recommenced in the morning. All through the night the enemy kept up a desultory fire, which was a trying ordeal for the troops, fatigued as they were by the long day's fight, during which they had been exposed for hours to a blazing sun, with but a very small supply of food. The Japanese suffered most severely, as the ground they were

holding on both sides of the causeway was two feet deep in water, and they had therefore to remain standing all night.

Just before sunrise the Japanese sappers stole forward to attempt to blow in the outer city gate. They were met with a tremendous volley of musketry, and one ball cut the electric wire which was to have been used for firing the charge. Lieutenant Inawe, however, pluckily rushed forward with a lighted fuse, and escaped, almost miraculously, unhurt. Meanwhile one of the Japanese soldiers had pluckily climbed the inner wall and unbarred the inner gate, and the Japanese poured into the city, the Chinese flying before them in all directions. The Japanese were followed by the Welsh Fusiliers, the rest of the troops marching round on the broad city walls to keep as many of the enemy from escaping as possible. There was a good deal of fighting in the streets and firing from the houses, but the greater part of the Chinese troops had retired during the night, having lost heart when they found that their assailants maintained their position and would recommence their attack in the morning. The Chinese loss was estimated at about five thousand; that of the allies was under eight hundred, of which five hundred occurred in the ranks of the Japanese.

The streets were littered with Chinese uniforms and the red sashes and badges of the Boxers, of which they had divested themselves as they ran. Numbers of bodies of people killed by the shells lay about, but only two women were found among them, which seemed to show that the greater portion of the inhabitants had fled before the attack began, leaving the city to be defended by the Boxers and the Imperial troops. The effect of the lyddite shells from the heavy guns had been terrible; indeed the Chinese looked upon lyddite as a sort of death-dealing magic.

The tactics of the attacking troops had not been good,

owing probably to the divided command. Had they been marched during the darkness they could have gained their position in the houses under the walls with comparatively slight loss, and could have blown in the gate and assaulted the city at once, instead of which they were halted a long way in front of the wall and then marched in broad daylight across an open plain devoid of cover, and halted for a couple of hours under fire while the bridge over the canal was being repaired. Moreover, almost all the troops were engaged in the operation, only a handful being left to guard the settlements, while a large body of Chinese cavalry kept hovering about some little distance away, and had they been under a competent leader, might have effected an entrance into the settlements and swept them from end to end. Still, the capture of Tientsin was worth the risk; it opened the road to Pekin, and relieved both Peiho and Shanghai from a danger that was every day increasing. It also conduced to the safety of every foreigner in the interior of China.

While the fighting had been going on, the Russians and Germans on the other side of the river circled round and stormed the batteries on the Lupi Canal, taking them with comparatively little opposition. During their advance one of the Chinese shells fell into a building inside the Russian line, in which, unknown to its occupants, dynamite was stored. The explosion was terrific; the windows of most of the houses in the settlements were shattered by it, although it occurred some way off on the other side of the river. The Russian general, who, with his staff, was close by at the moment, had his hand damaged by a falling building, his trumpeter was killed, and a number of men were knocked down by the force of the concussion. The total German and Russian loss was about one hundred and fifty killed and wounded. The Russians were aided by a four-inch gun from

the *Algerine* and a twelve-pounder from the *Terrible,* which rendered most valuable aid, as the Russians had with them only seven twelve-pounders of an old pattern.

The British guns were not very satisfactory until the arrival of the *Terrible's* twelve-pounder. The Hong-Kong guns were obsolete, and the British troops had none others, with the exception of some very old-fashioned naval six-pounders. Indeed the scandalous fact was brought to light that none of the British ships on the China station were equipped with modern quick-firing guns.

The Welsh Fusiliers, after joining the Japanese, pushed through the city up to the north gate, and advanced beyond it to the Grand Canal, where they captured two hundred junks and a small steamer. The Japanese captured also a number of guns, all of which proved very useful in the march to Pekin.

After the city was captured the Chinese had still a strong defensive position. They had fallen back to the railway and to the fort near the Viceroy's yamen; but they had no heart left in them, and in the afternoon the Japanese entered the fort without a fight and took possession of that and the yamen. Forty-five guns were found in the former, among them the big Krupp that had done such harm to the settlements in the early days of the bombardment, and several fifteen-pounder guns of recent pattern.

The first thing to be done was to extinguish the fires that were raging in several parts of the city. This was a difficult matter, and was not accomplished until a considerable part of the city had been consumed, the amount of property destroyed being enormous. The rest of the city was systematically looted. The Russians had not entered the town, but remained on the other side of the river. They had at once demanded that a military governor should be appointed, but

as they and the Japanese were much superior in force to the other nationalities it was evident that they intended that a Russian should be nominated. The matter was discussed with considerable acerbity at a council of commanding officers, but the proposal was finally rejected, and three commissioners, Colonel Wogack, Lieutenant-Colonel Bower, and Lieutenant-Colonel Aoki were appointed to govern the city of Tientsin, which was divided into four sections —British, American, French, and Japanese. A number of Chinese were enlisted to act as police under Captain Mockler of the Indian army, and though they were drilled by a Madras sepoy, who could not understand a word of their language, they became a very serviceable body.

Yu Lu, the Viceroy, managed to effect his escape from the yamen, but a few days later he and the whole of his family committed suicide. His fate was certainly a hard one. Up to the outbreak of hostilities he had done his best to suppress the Boxers and protect the foreigners. On June 9 he had tendered his resignation, but all his efforts in that direction were thwarted by the governor, and he was ordered to remain where he was. The hostility of his enemies at Pekin was carried beyond the grave, for an order was made for his posthumous degradation, a very terrible thing for a Chinese family, simply because he had failed to hold Tientsin against its assailants.

Many small forts round the town were captured without resistance. These mounted many guns, and the fact that the garrisons abandoned them without resistance showed the complete demoralization of the Chinese. If only the assailing force had been in a position to follow up their work, there is little doubt that they could have arrived at Pekin almost without striking a blow.

After extinguishing the fire the troops set to work to render

the town habitable. Great numbers of dead were removed from the houses that had been destroyed by shell fire, and from the streets, and in a very short time the town was brought into a satisfactory sanitary condition.

There was now a long pause. While the British and Americans were eager to advance towards Pekin at the earliest opportunity, the Russians fell back. There were but two of their people in Pekin, and it was evident that they were far more desirous of getting political advantages out of the situation than of reaching the Legations. They maintained that it would need an army of sixty thousand to force a way up. The differences between them and the other nationalities became more and more acute, and matters dragged on painfully. It was true that there was still an immense deal to be done before a force of even twenty thousand men could be ready to advance, but in spite of disagreement between the commanders, work was carried on vigorously. Junks and carts were collected, guns, and great stores of provisions and ammunition were brought from the coast, and troops poured in; but still no day was named for the advance.

The anger and discontent among the merchants and traders who had friends in Pekin increased daily. Men talked angrily and despairingly at the corners of the streets, and cursed the hesitation and bickering on the part of the military. Rex went about with his hands deep in his pockets and his head bent down, raging and pouring out abuse against the generals. His father in vain tried to calm him.

"My dear boy," he said, "you may be convinced that the five thousand or six thousand men that we have here are sufficient for the advance, but even I, anxious as I am to see an expedition set out, cannot agree with you. I quite believe that if on the day after we had taken Tientsin we had been ready to start, five thousand men might have done it. The

news taken by the flying Chinese would have sufficed to demoralize the enemy all over the country. But we were not ready, and the delay that has occurred having been sufficient to allow the Chinese to get over their scare, an expedition of only five thousand men would inevitably terminate in a fiasco, as did that under Seymour.

"I think myself that at least ten thousand men will be necessary to relieve Pekin. That force will require a large transport train. Besides, though we have taken a great number of Chinese guns, few of these are field-guns, and, as you know, we are at present terribly deficient in artillery. Even for the guns we have there is no ammunition, for nearly every round we had was fired away the other day. We have no provisions for the troops, and must wait till a sufficient supply is collected and brought up here, together with the guns and an ample supply of ammunition. All this cannot be done in a day. I grant that we do not seem to be pushing on matters as quickly as we should wish, but already five trains a day run down to Taku, and an immense deal of work has been quietly carried on. Besides, the military commanders are convinced that Pekin has already fallen, and that there is no occasion whatever for haste. Troopships are expected in every day with reinforcements from India, Japan, Germany, and France, and when in another week we may have twenty thousand troops here, the military authorities may be well excused for not deciding upon making an attempt with a quarter of that force."

"Well, Father, I hope that when we do go you will get me attached to the force as interpreter."

"Certainly, Rex. I have no fear that when the force does go on there will be any hitch this time. Which section would you like to be attached to?"

"Well, I think, Father, if I have the choice, I should like

to go with the Japs. They are awfully good little fellows, and as plucky as lions, and I fancy that as they are so strong they are certain to be well in front. I should really like to go with them."

"Very well, I have been supplying them with a great many goods, and have spoken to their general several times. He talks English very well. When I tell him that you have been twice into Pekin since it was besieged, and brought down the last message that got through from the British Minister, I should think he would be glad to take you."

Two days later Rex learned that he had obtained an appointment as interpreter with the Japanese troops, and that the general requested that he should begin his duties at once. It was a great relief to him to be employed again, as it took his thoughts off his friends at Pekin. There was not, however, much to do. The Japanese arrangements were all so perfect, the men so quick and handy, that there was no occasion for his services except in making small purchases, and in arranging with Chinese coolies to man the junks, and with country-people for carts. There was some difficulty in obtaining provisions, for the Russians had carried fire and sword among all the villages to a considerable distance on their side of the river, burning the houses and generally killing the inhabitants. The consequence was that no supplies could be got on that side of the river. The villagers, however, began to come in from the north side, very timidly at first, but more boldly when they found that they were unmolested by the soldiers, for American, British, and Japanese all treated them well, and, after the sack of the city was over, resumed their ordinary discipline.

Stores were now accumulating fast. Every train from Taku brought up troops, guns, ammunition, and provisions. The greatest difficulty was the disembarkment of these from

the ships thirteen miles away. Some of the merchant ships of light draught were able to come in and unload at the wharves. The blue-jackets and marines in the men-of-war aided in loading up the trucks, and the work went on with great rapidity.

Many of the Japanese officers spoke English, and Rex was soon at home among them, and found them very cheery, pleasant companions. Their general was a very agreeable man, with charming manners, and immensely popular among his troops. The greater portion of these were stationed in Tientsin, where they maintained perfect order in the district assigned to them, and Rex found that the natives returned more fearlessly to their districts than to those occupied by other nationalities.

On July the 20th a letter came down from Mr. Conger, the United States Minister at Pekin, saying that they had been besieged for a month under continuous shot and shell from the Chinese troops, and that quick relief only could prevent general massacre. This woke up the military commanders. General Gaselee, who commanded the British contingent, and General Chaffee, who commanded the Americans, insisted that an attempt at relief should be made at all hazards. To wait until sixty thousand men were assembled would be simply to sacrifice the Legations, and they informed the other commanders that they were determined to start even if they had to go alone.

There was still much to be done before arrangements were completed, but the work went on with increased life and spirit now that it was certain that the Legations were still holding out. It was not, however, until August 4 that all was ready. Even then jealousies had arisen; both the Russians and the Japanese wished to lead the advance, and none wished to accept a position behind the others. General Gaselee then

said that the British would take the rear-guard, as he only wished to get to Pekin, and did not care in the least which of the columns got there first so long as they reached it in time to relieve the Legations. After this act of abnegation it was very satisfactory that the British force was the first to enter the Legations.

The force was made up as follows:—Eight thousand Japanese under Lieutenant-General Baron Yamaguchi, with Major-General Fukushima as Chief of the staff; four thousand five hundred Russians under General Linievitch; three thousand British under Lieutenant-General Sir A. Gaselee, Major-General Barrow being his Chief of the staff; two thousand five hundred Americans under General Chaffee; eight hundred French under General Frey. The total force amounted to eighteen thousand eight hundred. No Germans took part in the expedition, and it was generally supposed that they preferred taking care of their own possessions at Shantung to rescuing the Legations. The total Japanese force, if they had all arrived, would have been twenty-two thousand. The Russians had three thousand men at their camp between Tientsin and Chefou, and a few British troops were left in Tientsin. It had been originally intended that Sir A. Gaselee should have a force of over seven thousand, but half the troops he brought with him had stopped at Shanghai by telegraphic instructions from home. This, though no doubt the presence of so large a force at Shanghai was useful in preventing trouble in the south of China, caused us to assume a very subordinate position in the expedition to Pekin, the Japanese, with their large force, doing the principal work of the campaign.

As the time advanced, Rex, whose despair at the long delay had driven him almost distracted, began to fear that the expedition would arrive too late. He was, of course,

ignorant that the capture of Tientsin had had a powerful effect on the position at Pekin. The Chinese had believed that the place was impregnable, and so long as it was there to menace the rear of an invading army they felt perfectly safe. It was a tremendous blow to them therefore to learn that this city, with all its forts, guns, and supplies of ammunition, had been captured after a single day's fighting, and the consequence was that their indecision increased.

The war party were confused, and the peace party, headed by Prince Ching, gained vastly greater influence in the councils of the Empress. The consequence was that for twenty days after the arrival of the news something like a truce prevailed. The besieged were even able to purchase small supplies of provisions and fruit, and their condition became much more tolerable. It was probable that the Empress would have thrown herself altogether into the hands of the peace party had it not been that the delay on the part of the allies had enabled the panic-stricken Chinese soldiers to recover their *morale* and discipline. They had been very strongly reinforced, and it was confidently hoped that they would be able to defeat the allies when they advanced. Thus the miserable delays caused by the jealousy of the allied commanders were not as prejudicial to the Legations as they otherwise would have been.

When hostilities were renewed, had the Chinese attacked as actively as they had done before the fall of Tientsin, it is morally certain that the defenders of the Legations would have found it impossible to continue their resistance, and that they would have been massacred.

"The Russians are at the bottom of all this hateful delay," said Rex. "I am convinced that the Japs, though the strongest in numbers, would give in willingly were it not that the Russians are always making fresh demands. We

and the Americans only want to get there, and the French are in such small numbers that it does not matter a rap what they think of it. It is the Russians who are to blame."

"There is no doubt about that, Rex," his father said. "I believe they are playing a double game. They want to pose as the friends of China and thus obtain concessions and an overwhelming influence at Pekin. This, it would seem, they try to do by all sorts of delays, by advancing petty claims, and by generally putting their spoke into the wheel. They have already got Manchuria under their thumb, and they will certainly stick to it unless China is backed up by the other powers and they unite in insisting that China shall not suffer further loss of territory at the hands of the Russians or anyone else. There is no question that that is our best policy. It is to our interest that China shall remain whole and united and capable of holding her own against Russia. Neither Britain nor Japan can have any desire for territory, and after the war is over, an alliance offensive and defensive between these two nations would be worth all the loss of life and property we have incurred."

"That would be grand, Father. There is no doubt that the Japs are beggars to fight. The way they smashed China showed that, and the other day they certainly did at least as well as the other nationalities. With their fleet and ours combined we could hold our own with the greatest ease against Russia and France, even if Germany were to join them. We are showing them now in South Africa what an army we can put in the field, and with our Indian army and that of the Japs we could, if pressed, drive the Russians out of Asia."

"That would be a big order," his father laughed, "but we could certainly effectually prevent them from meddling with China and make them keep within their own boundaries.

Besides, we should have China to count with also. China has wakened up since the war with Japan, and has gone in for the best modern guns and rifles. If she had let two more years pass before beginning this row we should have found her a very formidable opponent. Her troops would then have become as well-disciplined as ours."

"Well, then, I am very glad, Father, that they did not wait for another two years. We found it pretty hard work as it was to take Tientsin, and if the greater part of their army had not moved out during the night I doubt very much whether we should have captured it. It was lucky indeed that we stuck to it during the night; it was only that that turned the scale. You know the old story, Father, of a Chinaman who excused defeat by saying: 'Two men cannot be in one place; if one must come the other must go.'"

His father laughed.

"Well, I have no doubt it is something like that, Rex. When the Chinese saw that we were quite determined to get into Tientsin, our obstinacy and fixedness of purpose told upon them, and they began to say: 'These people have made up their minds to come, therefore we had better go.' Certainly they showed a great deal of pluck during the first day's fighting; even the tremendous cannonade to which they were exposed did not seem to shake their courage at all, for they fought as stoutly at the end of the day as they did at the beginning. We can hardly say that we gained any advantage whatever. We certainly have every reason to congratulate ourselves on the fact that they lost courage when they came to think it over after nightfall. Well, I have not the least fear that the force that is starting to-morrow will fail. If the Chinese did not stand when fighting behind strong walls, supported by a circle of strong forts mounting a prodigious number of cannon, it is hardly likely that they

will make anything like a determined resistance in the open. I anticipate that the difficulties will rather be in getting to Pekin than in defeating the enemy. We know that the banks of the Peiho have been cut and a large stretch of country inundated, and consequently the river is so sunk that it is very doubtful whether even the lighter craft among the junks will be able to get up. If they cannot, the expedition will be in nearly the same position as that of Admiral Seymour. They can't march without provisions, ammunition, and guns, and certainly the amount of land transport they have collected is nothing like sufficient for that. They must chiefly depend upon their junks, and if the river fails them they are brought to a stand-still."

"I am afraid that is so, Father," Rex said; "but at any rate we must hope for the best."

CHAPTER XIII

CAPTURING THE TAKU FORTS

ONE afternoon Rex went to see his friend the midshipman at the barricade.

"I wish you would tell me," Rex said, "all about the capture of the Taku Forts. Beyond the fact that they were captured I have heard next to nothing."

"Well, it is rather a long story," the middy said, "but as everything is quiet, I don't mind telling you about it if you like."

"I should be very much obliged if you would," Rex said.

"Well, then, here goes. You have not seen the place, I suppose?"

"No."

"Well, the mouth of the river is strongly fortified, especially on the north side, where there is a big casemated fort with earthworks, mounting altogether some fifty guns of different sizes. A third of a mile farther up the river is the inner fort, which is very strong, but smaller than the other, and mounts about thirty guns. An earthwork covered-way connects the two forts, and the parapet is pierced for many small guns. On the south side, extending a mile along the shore, are a number of casemated batteries, mounting about one hundred and twenty guns. These are good guns, and for the most part modern. There is also an inner fort a mile inland, built for the defence of the main magazines.

"All these fortifications consist of earthworks with cement

and concrete galleries. They are wonderfully well built; certainly as good as any I have ever seen. You see, mud is the usual substance with which they build houses in China, and they are wonderfully clever with it. At many points of the fortification there are high and very powerful redoubts, which carry at their angles very big modern guns, mostly Krupp quick-firers. All these forts seem to have been designed by foreigners; I don't think the Chinese would ever have been up to such work if they hadn't had foreign instructors. Apparently, however, they sacked these fellows when they had finished the batteries, and themselves carried out the rest of the work. There hasn't been any regular garrison in these forts for some years, but officials and hangers-on have resided there. When the row began, however, troops came marching in, and we calculated that at the time of the bombardment they were occupied by some eight thousand men. I fancy they were good soldiers, for they came from Hunan, which province is considered to turn out the best soldiers in China. Their general, Liu, came from the same place.

"Unfortunately the water near the forts is very shoal, and war-vessels that drew twenty feet of water were obliged to heave-to five miles off the bar; that is to say, ten miles off the forts. By the fifteenth there were twenty-five foreign men-of-war here—British, French, German, Austrian, Russian, Italian, and Japanese. An American ship came up a day or two before the battle. It was difficult getting news so far out, so the admiral's light-draught yacht anchored close outside the bar, and they ran a wire into the destroyer *Fame,* which was anchored just outside the fort. By this means despatches were wired out to the yacht, and either flashed or semaphored to the fleet. A mile above the fort was the Imperial naval yard and docks, and lying moored to the

wharves were four very fine thirty-two-knot German-built destroyers, with full Chinese crews on board.

"During the day before the battle everyone was on the *qui vive,* for it was known that a summons to surrender next day had been sent in to the forts. Only two trains were despatched for Tientsin, and both these had to be worked by engineers from the fleet, for all the Chinese had disappeared. A large Japanese force was landed from their ship, and encamped by the side of the railway at Tongku, two miles from the forts. Later in the day they shifted camp to the other side of the railway, to make room for a large Russian infantry force that had just come in from Port Arthur. Two hundred blue-jackets from our ships encamped near them in the evening, at the head of the road to the forts. A train came down from Tientsin in the afternoon containing a number of foreigners, principally women and children, who at once took shelter on some merchant steamers lying off the wharves.

"During the day the *Fame* dropped her end of the wire, and, steaming up the river, took up her station by the four Chinese destroyers in the middle yard. The *Algerine,* which had been lying between the north and south forts, also moved up the river to a berth about a third of a mile off the inner north fort. A quarter of a mile higher three Russian gunboats were moored in line; higher still lay the German gunboats, moored to one of the wharves; and a little lower down was the French *Lion.* At another wharf higher up lay the Japanese *Atago,* and higher up the United States paddle-wheel steamer *Monocacy.* I hope I am not boring you with too many particulars?"

"Not at all, I am much obliged to you for giving me such a good account; I seem to be able to see the whole thing."

"Well, I must tell you that the *Monocacy* had been

ordered to take no share in the business, but she did useful work in giving shelter to a number of women and children. Although we knew that an ultimatum had been sent in, nobody dreamed that the rumpus was going to begin so soon. We thought that, as usual, messages would be exchanged, and that the thing would drag on a little before anything serious came of it. The *Algerine* had her ventilators up, masts all standing, and yards crossed. The Germans on the *Iltis* had landed their boats and ventilators some days before; the *Lion* had housed her ventilators but still had her yards crossed. At nine o'clock a long searchlight train went out under the command of Lieutenants Kirkpatrick and Riley, with the twelve-pounder Hotchkiss, two Maxims, and a hundred men—German, British, and French. It was stoked by British blue-jackets, and was driven by a German engineer from the *Iltis*.

"All watched the glare of the searchlight for about three hours, till it disappeared across the plain in the direction of Tientsin. Then all who were on the port watch turned in. We had scarcely got into our hammocks when there was the boom of a heavy gun, and you can imagine how quickly we all jumped into our clothes again and ran on deck. We could see that the inner north fort was firing, and guessed that the *Algerine,* which was lying nearest to her, was the target. No return shot came from her, and it was evident that she was taken as much by surprise as we were. Bom, bom, bom went the big guns. It was about five minutes before the *Algerine* replied, and shortly afterwards the three Russian gun-boats returned the fire, and the *Iltis* and the *Lion* also joined in.

"Of course, all this part of the business I am telling you from hearsay, for we were necessarily only spectators of the affray; and you can imagine, Bateman, that we were hopping mad with being altogether out of it. It was enough to

make one tear one's hair. However, the great part of the blue-jackets and marines were ashore, and would soon be having a look-in; but there were we, as much out of it as if we were off Spithead. Well, of course, now that I have had my turn ashore here I am satisfied, but at the time it was maddening.

"Nevertheless it was a splendid sight, I can tell you. All the forts had now joined in, and the flashes that burst from them and from the gun-boats were almost incessant. In a few minutes the *Iltis* steamed down at full speed from her wharf and joined the three Russians and the *Algerine*, the crews of which cheered her enthusiastically as she went into action. Shortly afterwards the French *Lion* also came down. She had been lying with her head up the river, and so had taken longer than the *Iltis*. She, too, was warmly welcomed. The whole of the forts were now pouring in a heavy cannonade, and every gun that could be brought to bear from the six gun-boats replied at a range of hardly a mile. The *Iltis*, with her eight 3.4 quick-firers, and the *Algerine*, with her 4-inch guns, engaged the north fort. The *Lion*, with her two 5.5-inch guns, joined them, while the three Russians directed their fire on the south forts. They were all heavily armed, the *Bobr* had a 9-inch gun in her bows, and a 6-inch in her stern. The *Corkoretch* had two 8-inch guns and one 6-inch, and the *Gilyak* had one 4-inch gun in her bows, two 2.6-inch guns and four 1.8-inch guns in her military top.

"All the ships kept up a heavy and methodical fire from the machine-guns in their tops, and so searched out the bastions; while the heavy guns made it impossible for the gunners to stick to their work. It was, however, difficult to keep up an accurate fire against a gun in the shade of the forts. Many of the Chinese soldiers left the fort, and, taking cover among the mud-houses, maintained a heavy fire on the

men on deck and in the tops, and the *Gilyak,* which was closest to the village, suffered heavily.

"Meanwhile the *Fame* and the *Whiting* had been ordered to attack the four Chinese destroyers lying in dock. As they approached, however, the Chinese crews jumped ashore and bolted. The *Fame* grappled one, and towed it down the river to Tongku, two tow-boats belonging to a mercantile company took the two others in charge, and the *Whiting* brought out the fourth. These four splendid destroyers, if they had been manned with resolute crews, could have sunk six gun-boats without difficulty.

"The battle raged till morning. The gun-boats were doing their utmost to keep down the fire of the forts; but although the practice was excellent, they quite failed to do so owing to the fact that it was impossible to get the exact range. Fortunately the fire of the Chinese was extremely inaccurate. The gunners were evidently unaccustomed to work heavy guns, such as they were now handling, and although they stuck gallantly to their work in spite of the large number of casualties, they did little damage. Sometimes the powder charges were altogether too heavy, sametimes so light that the shot never reached the ships. Their shells almost all failed to burst. Sometimes a shot would fall close alongside, and the next would go clean overhead.

"As daylight approached, the boats got up anchor, with the exception of the *Gilyak,* which had received a heavy projectile on her water-line. She made water fast, but still maintained a heavy fire, and remained at her moorings while the damage was being temporarily repaired, though she suffered severely in consequence. You may imagine what a state of mind we were all in on board the larger ships. There were those six little boats fighting against a whole chain of huge forts that ought to have sunk them at the first round.

"Meanwhile, of course, our fellows, the Russians, and Japs, who had landed the day before, were not idle. Naturally they got under arms as soon as the first gun was fired, but they could really do nothing until daylight, for they were ignorant of the country, which was all cut up with dykes and ditches.

"If the force had tried to cross there in the dark they would speedily have been broken up and half of them would have been mired. They chafed very much, however, at the delay, though they recognized the necessity of it, and they set out eagerly at the first gleam of daylight.

"When they got up anchor, the gun-boats moved backwards and forwards, engaging a fort here, plumping shell into another somewhere else, and seeming to care nothing at all for the rain of shot and shell to which they were exposed. It was difficult for us to keep count of them, moving about as they did, and more than once a good many of us thought that one of them was gone.

"Presently we were all in the boats and making for the shore. Day began to break just as we approached the forts. At this moment the Chinese gunners doubled their fire, and now we thought the gun-boats could never live under such a storm of shot and shell. But their fire was as regular as ever, and the fact that they were all in motion seemed to bother the Chinese gunners as much as the darkness had done. A 10-inch gun isn't easily managed by men who have never used such a toy before, so that although the fire from the smaller guns was more accurate than it had been, it seemed to us that the big ones fired less frequently. The *Iltis* was hit by a heavy shot, and at the same moment a magazine at the northern end of the south fort blew up. The Chinese fire slackened a little, but in a short time the action was as hot as ever.

"We and the Japs were making for the north forts, and the Russians for the other side. I tell you, Bateman, things looked nasty. By six o'clock the storming parties were near the north forts, and a heavy fire was already opened upon them; but they pushed steadily forward until at eighteen minutes past six the main magazine of the south forts blew up. The concussion was terrible, and a dense black column of smoke and fragments of all sorts rose a thousand feet in the air.

"Firing stopped instantly, and for half a minute a dead silence reigned. Then a tremendous cheer rose from the gun-boats and storming parties, and the latter raced forward to the assault. Firing was renewed more briskly than ever on both sides, but at half-past six the resistance had almost ceased, and the British flag was hoisted on the north fort, followed a minute later by that of the Japanese. The garrison of the southern fort, appalled by the destruction that had been made by the explosion, were already in full flight across the plain, and now those on the north side were endeavouring to follow their example.

"The number of casualties among the storming party had not been large, that of the British and Japanese amounting to only twenty-six killed and wounded. The casualties in the gun-boats were remarkably few, almost miraculously so considering the fire to which they had been exposed. The Russians had suffered most, having sixteen men killed and three officers and fifty-two men wounded; the Germans had six killed and fifteen wounded; the French one officer killed and one man wounded; and the British three men killed and one officer wounded. The Chinese actually in the forts consisted of three thousand men. The rest were in support behind and near the line of railway, and took no part in the affair. Nearly one thousand killed were found in the

forts, and the prisoners, who were nearly as many, were set to throw the bodies into the river.

"All communications ceased with Tientsin from the time of the capture of the forts, and it was not till some days afterwards that we learned from a man who rode through the Chinese lines that the place was besieged and that the garrison were hardly able to hold their own.

"There is no doubt that it was a fine action, and we, who had been left on board the ship, were very sore at being out of it; but, of course, even if we had been ashore, we should only have been with the assaulting column, and their share in the business was a very small one. The gun-boats had all the fighting and all the glory. I dare say, however, that we shall get our share presently. I don't think the Chinese are much good in the open, but I fancy they can stick to their walls, and in the narrow streets we may have very sharp work."

"It must have been a grand affair," Rex said. "Fancy six little gun-boats fighting for so many hours against forts mounting nearly three hundred guns! Of course some of these couldn't be brought to bear upon them, but there must have been enough to blow them out of the water in a quarter of an hour."

"One would certainly think so, but we must remember that the guns had to be very much depressed, and the gunners could not very well make out the boats in the dark. Of course the flashes of their guns showed their position, but I expect the Chinese, who were new hands at the work, did not understand how to sling those heavy pieces about or give them the right elevation. There is no doubt that they stick to their guns manfully. I was talking to some of the *Algerine* fellows and they told me that several times when they had managed to send shell after shell close to a gun that had

been annoying them, it was silent for a half a minute or so and then, when they thought that they had finished with it, the beggars began to fire again as regularly as before, though it is probable that three-fourths of the detachment before working it had been blown into smithereens."

"Listen! Do you hear the shouting? The relief party must be coming in."

"Oh, bother!" the middy said; "I can't be there to see it."

"Well, I can," Rex said, "I will come back and tell you all about it; but I don't suppose I shall hear much till evening. You will be off duty then, won't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, come and dine at our place. I shall get hold of two or three of the men I went up with if I can."

He went off at a run and soon joined a number of residents and men off duty who were awaiting the arrival of the force. The head of the column was just coming in. A portion of the relief force led, and then Admiral Seymour's men, many of them carying the sick and wounded on stretchers, doors, and other make-shifts. The rest of the force brought up the rear. Seeing Major Johnston coming along with his marines, Rex pressed forward to shake hands with him.

"Ah, you got through then, Bateman! I am glad to see you; I have wondered many times whether you got safely into Pekin. I certainly did not expect to see you here, though I thought we might meet when we marched into Pekin."

"Yes, I got in all right. I stopped there till about a week ago, and then came back here. If you have nothing better to do, will you dine with us this evening, and bring Trimmer and Lawson with you?"

"With pleasure. We shall scarcely have time to make any mess arrangements for ourselves."

"Have you had heavy fighting?"

"We have, indeed, and we have lost a good many men. I began to think at one time that we should not get back, and I believe if we had not taken the arsenal very few of us would have survived to tell the tale. However, I will tell you about that this evening."

"Thank you! I will run home at once and tell my people that you are coming."

Rex hurried home and told his mother that four officers were coming to dinner.

"I did not say anything about sleeping here, Mother, but if you can manage it I am sure it would be a blessing to them, for they have only just got in, and will certainly not be able to make other arrangements."

"They will have to be content with very simple fare," Mrs. Bateman said. "Of course, no fresh meat can be had, so we shall have to manage on tinned meat and vegetables, of which, fortunately, we have an abundant and varied supply."

"You may be sure that they will not be particular, Mother, for I expect they have been on very short rations for some time. You give us a capital dinner every day, and I am sure you can turn out as good a one for them."

Mrs. Bateman smiled.

"Well, I dare say we shall manage something that will be good enough for hungry men."

Rex then went down to his friend the middy.

"I have nothing to tell you, Robinson," he said, "but Johnston and two of his chums are going to dine with us, so you will hear it all then, and my mother says she can give you a bed for the night."

"Thanks! that is a luxury indeed, Bateman, only it will be awful getting up so as to be here on duty again at six in the morning."

"Oh, nonsense! no one wants to sleep after five in this weather. I am generally up soon after four."

"Yes, but you must remember that I have had no sleep to speak of for the past three days, and the chances are that we shan't turn in until midnight, as we shall have to hear all about the expedition. However, I will put in as much sleep as I can between that hour and five. I had a good four hours this morning."

At half-past seven the three marines and the middy arrived at Mr. Bateman's. Rex had, an hour before, gone to Major Johnston, and told him that it had been arranged that he and his friends were to sleep in the house.

"That will be a great comfort, Bateman," he said; "we have not had our clothes off for three weeks, and it will be delicious to lie down between sheets and to have a bath in the morning. I warn you, though, that we shall want a bath before dinner, for we can't sit down to a table as we are."

"All right, Major! if you come round in half an hour you will find one ready for you."

Accordingly, on their arrival they were shown at once to their rooms.

"I cannot tell you, Bateman," the major said as they came downstairs again, "how much we are obliged to you. A good dinner is not a thing to be despised, but a bath is even a greater luxury. I am sure I could not have enjoyed dinner unless I had had the bath, for we have had few opportunities for washing since we left here."

An excellent dinner was served, and was greatly enjoyed by the four guests.

"I can assure you, Mr. Bateman," the major said, "that while eating your good fare it is difficult to believe that the past three weeks have not been a very uncomfortable dream."

"How have you been getting on, Mr. Robinson, since you came here?" Mr. Bateman asked.

"Nothing to grumble at, sir. We had pretty hard work the first two days, but, thanks to your son, we now have a quiet day of it."

Rex uttered a sharp warning ejaculation as Robinson spoke, but he had not thought of telling him that he and his companions wished nothing to be said about the adventure.

"Thanks to my son!" Mr. Bateman repeated in surprise; "what can Rex have had to do with it?"

The midshipman, who had too late heard Rex's ejaculation, hesitated.

"I did not know that he had not told you, sir," he said, "or else you may be sure I should have said nothing about it."

"Well, but what was it?" he asked.

The midshipman looked appealingly at Rex, and the latter said: "Well, Father, it was a little enterprise that Watson and Laurence and I carried out on our own account; nothing worth talking about."

"Well, but what was it, Rex?" his father persisted. "Mr. Robinson says that it has given him better times."

"Well, Father, the fact is, we three and Ah Lo went out and silenced those two guns that were so annoying for some days."

"Well, but how did you do it, Rex? Now we know so much, of course we want to know the rest. What do you know about it, Mr. Robinson?"

"Well, sir, all I really know about it is that your son came to me and asked me to allow a lantern to stand on the barricade. Of course I said that there was no objection to that. Then we went back fifty or sixty yards and placed another lantern on a window, so that the two lanterns together were

in the exact line with those guns. At midnight Rex and his two friends, with the Chinaman, went out, and that is practically all I know about the matter. I certainly had no idea that Rex had kept the affair a secret. It is certainly a thing of which he had a right to feel very proud, for it was a plucky business, and one which I was very much tempted to take part in."

"Now then, Bateman," Major Johnston said, "you see your light cannot be hid under a bushel, so you had better make a clean breast of the affair."

Rex saw that it was of no use making any further mystery of it, so he briefly explained how the idea had come into his mind, and how Watson and Laurence had agreed to join him, the steps they had taken for placing the lantern to enable them to find the guns in the dark, how Robinson had explained the working of the various parts of the guns to them, and how they had carried their plan into successful execution.

"You ought not have done it," his father said, when he had finished.

"But," Major Johnston said, "I don't think, Mr. Bateman, that your son is to be blamed. It was a splendidly plucky action for which everyone in the settlement should thank him, for it appears that these guns were doing an immense amount of damage. It was an act which I or any other officer in Her Majesty's service would have been proud to perform."

"I admit all that," Mr. Bateman said, "but Rex is always running into danger. I grant that so far he has got through safely, but you know the result of taking a pitcher to a well too often."

"I don't think he is likely to come to harm," the major said, "for it is not as if he undertook these things without thoroughly working his plans out, so that failure is almost an

impossibility. On our way up he gave me a brief account of how he had got his cousins out of that rascally governor's yamen. I could not get the full details out of him, but judging from what he told me it was certainly an admirably-managed affair. I think, Mr. Bateman, that you have a right to be very proud of him. If he had been in the army he would certainly have earned a V. C. for the way in which he silenced those guns."

"Yes, I admit all that," Mr. Bateman said, "and won't scold, but all this keeps his mother and myself in a state of great anxiety."

"I don't think, Father," Rex said, "that in an affair of this sort the risk is anything compared with that which one runs in a regular fight. These little excursions I have made have had very little risk in them—practically none. When you come to think of it, I can pass anywhere as a Chinaman, and as I have always travelled at night I have been exposed to practically no danger whatever."

"And so you had sharp fighting here, Mr. Bateman?" the major said, changing the subject.

"Not actually severe fighting; that is, the Chinese have never got up really close to us, although they have made a good many rushes, but the bombardment has been very heavy. The French settlement is practically destroyed, and a large number of our houses will have to be rebuilt. But worse than the artillery fire has been the sniping, which has been continuous all round, but more especially on the other side of the river, where it has been absolutely incessant, and where it has been dangerous in the extreme to show one's nose outside one's door. We have done our best to keep it down, but I cannot say that success has attended our efforts, for the Chinese have lain hid among the houses and ruins, and never show themselves except to fire."

"Have the casualties been heavy?"

"No; very slight indeed, which," he added with a smile, "speaks well either for our prudence or for the bad marksmanship of the enemy. We have brought cannon to bear upon them, but they stick there with great tenacity, and I fancy we shall find it very hard work to drive them out from Tientsin. There is the fort, and the yamen, and several other strong buildings; the wall, too, and its defences are strong, and if they stick there as stubbornly as they have done across the river, the city will certainly not be taken without considerable loss of life."

"Do you know when we are going to begin, Mr. Bateman?"

"I believe the Russians are going to turn out to-morrow morning; they have only been waiting for your return. Now, I fancy, they will consider that we have strength enough for anything."

"I should think we have," the major said. "I am sorry to say that you must not put Seymour's force above half the strength at which it started. There has been a lot of illness, we have suffered much from hunger and privation, we lost a good many men in the attack on the forts, and many of those still in the ranks will not be fit for service until they have had a few days' rest. If we put a thousand in line to-morrow it would be as much as could be fairly calculated upon. Still, many of those who would not be fit to take part in the attack would be useful for the defence of the town if the Chinese should make a counter attack while the best part of the force is away."

"Now, Major, we are all burning with curiosity to know what has happened to you while you have been away. We have heard a score of rumours, but not one authentic fact. We heard that you had entered Pekin, that you had been

massacred, that you had disappeared as effectually off the face of the earth as if it had opened and swallowed you up. The very first news we got of your existence was from my son, who reported that on his way down from Pekin he heard heavy and continuous firing in the arsenal of Hsi-Ku, and he concluded that your force must be engaged. Some thought that you must be attacking the place, others that you had taken it and were now besieged. The latter certainly seemed the most reasonable, unless indeed, it was fight between the Boxers and the regular Chinese troops; for if you had not got possession of the arsenal, it was impossible to imagine how you had obtained sufficient provisions to keep you alive so long."

"Yes, that supposition was the correct one, and we were quite on our last legs before we took the place."

"Well, will you please tell us the whole story; it is not nine o'clock yet, so that, unless you are so dead tired that you cannot go through with it, you will get it done in reasonable time."

"I shall be very happy to do so," the major said. "If you had asked me this afternoon when we came in, I should have said frankly that I did not feel equal to it; but the bath and the excellent dinner you have given us, have quite set me on my legs again.

"You will already have heard from your son what happened on our way up from Lang Fang, and of the little fight we had on the 14th of June. Well, the next day the outposts ran in and reported that the Boxers were at hand in great numbers. The enemy arrived close on their heels and made a determined rush at the fore part of the leading train, which was drawn up beside a well, where the men were engaged in watering. They were met by a withering fire, but pushed on with extreme bravery and did not fall back until some of

them actually reached the train. Then they could do no more, and retreated, leaving about a hundred dead. This certainly gave us a better idea of their courage, and the difficulties we should be likely to encounter, than anything that had yet happened.

"At half-past five in the afternoon a messenger arrived on a trolley from the rear, to say that Lofa station was attacked by a very strong force of the enemy. Number two train had steam up, and the admiral at once took a strong force down in it. On their arrival at the station they found that the fight was over, and the enemy having fallen back discomfited, the reinforcements started in pursuit, and harried their retreat for some distance, accounting for about a hundred of them and capturing a few small cannon.

"The next day we remained at Lang Fang, a strong body being employed in repairing the line. Under the protection of a guard a train went back to Lofa, and on its return we learned that the repairs we had affected on the line beyond that place had been a good deal broken up. Later, the officer of the guard at Lofa came in, and reported that three large bodies of Boxers were moving about in the distance, and that he expected an attack would be made on the station. However, they moved off quietly. They were probably on their way to destroy the line, for a train that left at four the next morning for Tientsin came back in the afternoon, with the news that the line was so completely broken up round Lofa that it could not be repaired with the materials and men on board.

"The admiral left an hour later to see for himself the state of the line. He pushed on for some distance, his men repairing the line as they went, till he reached Yangstun, but only to find that beyond that point the line was entirely destroyed. It was now evident to the admiral, and to all of us, that if we

continued to stop at Lang Fang we should ere long have to stop there permanently, for our provisions were almost entirely exhausted. The admiral had seen this some days before, and had sent off several messengers to Tientsin to ask that junks should be sent up the river, and ammunition and provisions forwarded by train to Yangtsun, his intention being to establish a base there. But we never heard any more of these messengers, and the fact stared us in the face that we were absolutely cut off from Tientsin.

CHAPTER XIV

SURROUNDED

ON the seventeenth messages were sent to Lofa and Lang Fang to recall the three trains there, but it was evident that it would be impossible to utilize them for our retreat, as they might be suddenly cut off by the Boxers. One came in on the afternoon of the next day, and the others arrived in the evening. They had had some very sharp fighting. The German naval officer, who was in charge of the two trains, reported that he had been attacked early that afternoon by a force of fully five thousand men, including cavalry, a great proportion of whom were armed with magazine rifles of the latest pattern. The attack was made both in front and on the flanks. The troops marched out against them, and although exposed to a heavy fire, forced them to retreat. Nevertheless, when our men retired towards the train, the enemy rallied and advanced again with the evident determination to gain their object; but being beaten off with more loss than before, they finally retreated. Their loss was over four hundred killed, while we had six killed and forty-eight wounded. In the course of the fight a banner was captured which belonged to the army of Tung-Fu-Hsiang. This was the first indication we had that the Imperial Chinese troops had taken the field against us.

"A conference of the commanding officers of the various nationalities was held the next day, and it was decided that,

as the railway was completely destroyed on both sides of them, and they could not use it either for advance or retreat, it would be better to endeavour to withdraw to Tientsin. Preparations were at once made. The wounded and the few remaining stores were carried down and placed on board some junks that had been captured on the previous day, and at three o'clock in the afternoon a start was made. Progress, however, was not destined to be rapid, for the junks had not gone far before they grounded in a shallow reach of the river. Three of them were got off pretty easily; but a six-pounder quick-firing gun of the *Centurion* had to be thrown overboard to lighten the fourth before she would float. In consequence of this delay, we had only made two and a half miles when night fell. We started early the next morning and were fighting all day, but progress was very much retarded by the necessity for keeping abreast of the junks. The management of these lubberly craft was beyond the European sailors, and as no Chinaman could be got to navigate them they were continually running across the river and getting stuck, so that from four o'clock in the morning till six in the evening the force only advanced eight miles.

"The fighting began at a quarter-past nine. The Chinese occupied a village near the bank, and when they were driven out they fell back to the next village. Here they were reinforced, and village after village had to be carried either by rifle fire, or, in some cases, where the resistance was too obstinate, by a bayonet charge. The Chinese stood splendidly against our rifle fire, but they could not bring themselves to face the bayonet; the cheers of our men seemed to take all the spirit out of them. In the afternoon the Chinese opened fire with a one-pounder quick-firing gun. It did not do any great damage, but it harassed the troops in their ad-

vance, especially when they had to cross open ground. The enemy were using smokeless powder, and consequently, as the gun was frequently shifted, we found it impossible to locate its position and so to keep down its fire with musketry.

"It was a very trying day. The heat was great, the water in the water-bottles was soon exhausted, and the men were too busily engaged to go down to the river to refill them. The next day was even worse. A start was made at half-past seven, and we had not gone far when we saw some two hundred cavalry on the left flank of the advance guard. All hoped at first that this was a detachment of Cossacks who had come to our aid, but this hope was doomed to disappointment, for as they drew nearer their dress showed that they were Chinese troops. For the rest of the day they hovered about on our left flank, firing when they saw an opportunity; but a few well-directed shrapnel-shell from the nine-pounder sufficed to keep them at a distance. As soon as they had retired, after reconnoitring our position, they opened fire with a field-gun and a one-pounder quick-firing gun. We replied with our nine-pounder and machine-guns, and as the enemy were using ordinary powder, the smoke of which showed their position, they were soon obliged to shift. They were quiet for a time, but they began again in the course of the day, always, however, with the same result. Fighting went on continuously, as village after village, and the town of Peitsang, which is the chief place between Yangtsun and Tientsin, had to be carried.

"At six o'clock in the evening we halted, having arrived opposite a very strong position held by the enemy, from which we were unable to dislodge them. The commanding officers held a council of war, and decided that, after we had had some refreshment and a few hours' rest, we should make a night march as the best chance of getting through. We had

made only six miles during the day, owing to the stubborn resistance of the enemy and their increased gun power.

"In the course of the evening the field and machine-guns were placed on board a junk that had been taken on the previous day, and at one o'clock in the morning the march recommenced. Fires were soon seen at a little distance from the river bank, and it was obvious that the enemy were by this means signalling our approach. A heavy fire opened on the force from a village some hundred yards ahead, and a shell from a field-piece struck the junk that was carrying the guns, and she filled and had to be abandoned. The guns unfortunately, could not be got off, but the Maxims were saved. The village was carried by the marines with fixed bayonets.

"At four o'clock we arrived opposite a great building, which turned out to be the Imperial arsenal of Hsi Ku. Two unarmed soldiers came out from a house a hundred yards from the bank with the evident intention of communicating with us. Our advance halted, and the men, when they came up, made some simple enquiries as to who we were and where we were going. Having got what information they wanted they sauntered back to the houses, from which, as soon as they reached them a heavy fire was opened with rifles and guns. Fortunately there was good cover close at hand. Some of our fellows occupied a neighbouring village, and others took shelter behind the river embankment.

"It was then decided to take the arsenal. The resistance was becoming more severe with every yard the force advanced, the provisions were almost exhausted, and the troops, who had been for some time on half-rations, were exhausted with the heat and their continual exertions. The attack was begun with a heavy rifle fire against a Hotchkiss gun in the north corner of the arsenal and two guns on the river front,

which were soon silenced. A body of marines and seamen was then directed to cross the river higher up, and, if possible, to rush the enemy's position at the north corner. Fortunately there was a village only a hundred and fifty yards from this point, and the sailors, having crawled up there unobserved, dashed out of cover at the double with a cheer, in which the troops on the other side of the river joined, and the Chinese at the corner they were making for bolted at once. Lower down the river a German detachment had crossed and captured the guns in their front, and subsequently several others. Between them the two bodies cleared out the armoury.

"In the afternoon the Chinese made a most determined attempt to retake the arsenal, advancing boldly under a very heavy shell fire. As, however, we had the captured guns, we drove the enemy back with heavy losses, but not before we had suffered considerably ourselves. The main body of the troops and the wounded were in the meantime crossing, and late in the afternoon the whole force was safe in the arsenal.

"Things looked better now than they had done since we had left Tientsin. Of course we had no knowledge at all of what was going on there, and thought that we should only have to maintain ourselves till a force was sent out to our assistance.

"Several messengers had been sent on during the march, and during the night three officers with a hundred marines set out to try to make their way down to Tientsin. They had scarcely started, however, when they encountered a determined resistance. Bugles sounded in all directions, and finding that the whole force of the enemy was upon them, and having lost four of their number, they had no option but to fall back. At daylight the Chinese made another desperate

attempt to retake the armoury, and maintained this until eight o'clock, when they were beaten off.

"We had now time to make a thorough investigation of the contents of the various buildings, and to our delight we found a store of some fifteen tons of rice. This placed us for some time beyond the risk of starvation. We discovered, too, an immense supply of guns, arms, and ammunition, and war material of the latest pattern, so that we felt capable of holding out for a long time. At a council of war it was considered to be impossible to force a way down, for we had now no fewer than two hundred and thirty wounded to carry. Our first move was to mount a number of guns on the various fronts of the arsenal, and with these we opened fire upon a Boxer stronghold situated near the arsenal and the Chinese fort lower down the river. The effect was excellent; the Chinese retired, and made no fresh attempt to retake the place.

"On the twenty-fifth European troops were reported in sight, and at seven o'clock the relief column under Colonel Shirinsky arrived at the fort. Preparations were at once made for the evacuation of the armoury and for the destruction of the arsenal. The wounded were transported across the river in the afternoon, and the whole force followed later. At three o'clock on the following morning we started, two officers remaining behind to set fire to the ammunition and store-houses. Fires were lit in five separate places, and from the volumes of smoke that rose from the building, and the explosions which we heard from that direction, the destruction seemed fairly complete. The officers crossed the river after lighting the fires, mounted ponies that were waiting for them, and then rejoined the main body, which met with no further resistance.

"The country through which we passed was flat, and along

the river banks villages of mud-huts, generally surrounded with enclosures of dried reeds, were scattered at frequent intervals. Near the villages high reeds grew plentifully in patches, and trees were numerous. These, with the entrenchments for irrigation and against flood, and the graves everywhere scattered about, afforded excellent cover to the enemy; they seldom exposed themselves, always withdrawing as we advanced. Their fire was generally very high; had it been otherwise we should have suffered very severely. Altogether, I think that, although we failed in our object, the affair has been very creditable, and, considering the difficulties to which we were exposed, none of those who took part in it have any reason to be ashamed of what they have done. At the beginning our opponents were largely armed only with swords and spears, but in the latter part we had to encounter trained troops excellently armed and provided with guns, and there can be no doubt that all these belonged to the regular army."

"Thank you very much, Major Johnston, for your interesting account!" Mr. Bateman said. "We have been fighting nearly as hard here for the past ten days, and I hope now that in a short time we shall begin to turn the tables upon them. I expect you will have hard work before you to take Tientsin, for there you will probably be opposed by all the troops with whom you have hitherto been engaged. I have no doubt that they have followed you down to-day, anticipating that we shall now take the offensive."

"Yes, I expect we shall have some stiff fighting," Major Johnston said, "but you may be sure that we sha'n't shirk it. Well, I think now, with your permission, that we will turn in. We had no sleep to speak of last night, and may be wanted again early in the morning."

The three officers were up early and went down to see after

the marines, and Rex went out with them to hear what was going to be done. The town presented a very different appearance from that which it had shown for the past ten days. The streets were no longer deserted, but swarmed everywhere with troops; bugles were blowing, and all was life and bustle. The houses that had been closed were open again, and men congratulated each other that the strain was over. Rex went down to the shed which was the head-quarters of the volunteers. Here some twenty or thirty had already assembled. Rex was, of course, in the simple uniform of the corps, and had brought his rifle with him.

"What is going to be done?" he asked.

"We don't know yet," said one of his friends. "The Russians are certainly going to march out, and I suppose a mixed column will also go, in which case we shall accompany it. I expect we shall get orders before long."

Tientsin is one of the most important towns in China. Standing as it does at the junction of the Peiho, the Grand Canal, the Lupi Canal, and five smaller streams and canals, it is not only the port of Pekin, but practically the sole outlet of the trade of the whole of the north-western provinces of China. Its population amounts to nearly a million, and its trade is considerably better than that of Canton, and is exceeded only by that of Shanghai. The native city is enclosed in sombre walls, and lies some two miles farther up the river than the foreign settlements. The imports of Tientsin include not only European manufactures, but also sugar, salt, and the tribute rice of the southern provinces. From the interior there is a vast export trade in the wood and furs of Manchuria and Mongolia, the teas of Hang-Chow, and the ground-nuts and bristles of Chih-li.

The foreign trade was growing rapidly, and would have

increased still more but for the want of water in the Peiho. This river is about the size of the Thames at Richmond, but it used to be deep, with rapid currents, and large ocean-going steamers were able to come up to the settlements to unload. The extensive canal and irrigation works, however, have of late years greatly diminished the flow of water, so that now vessels of any considerable draught have to remain outside the bar, thirteen miles out at sea, and even small vessels can only come as far as Tonku, three miles up the river mouth.

As soon as it was known that the allied generals had decided upon the bombardment of the city, earnest protestations were made by the leading merchants of all nationalities, but the military necessities overruled their wishes. Until the town was captured the settlements would be practically beleaguered, and it would be impossible to make an advance to Pekin and leave the large Chinese force in the city behind. Moreover, if the advance did not take place, not only would the Legations at Pekin inevitably fall, but the life of every European in China would be in jeopardy. Consequently the allied generals arrived unanimously at the conclusion that the bombardment and assault of Tientsin was an absolute and vital necessity. Already there had been an enormous loss of life there. Thousands, if not tens of thousands, of the Chinese suspected of being favourable to the allies had been sacrificed, and in the perpetration of these outrages whole streets had been destroyed by fire. It was therefore necessary, if for no other reason, to inflict a terrible lesson upon the Chinese troops who occupied the city.

The Chinese were convinced that it would be impossible for the Europeans to capture their city, held as it was by a greatly superior force of regular Chinese troops, and protected by a very large number of guns.

The bombardment was to be greatly deplored, for the enormous injury inflicted upon Tientsin could not but cripple the trade there for many years, and probably divert it to other channels. Still, the necessity could not be denied, grievous though its effects might be.

The Russians had already started from their camp, which was on the opposite side of the river, in the foreign settlements, and marched against the Peiyang arsenal, which is on the same side, about a mile and a half up. It was defended by several thousand Chinese, with six nine-pounder Krupps. The attack had to be made across an open plain, and this was swept by an incessant rifle fire, while the Chinese artillery made excellent practice. The casualties mounted up quickly, and before long a halt was called, and messengers were sent to Tientsin to ask for reinforcements.

When the messengers arrived, the bugle sounded and the troops hastily assembled. The whole of the Naval Brigade, under Captain Bourke of the *Orlando,* was called out, including a battalion of marines under Major Johnston, and with them went a twelve-pounder gun from the *Terrible.* The American Marine Artillery also went out, together with a detachment of Tientsin volunteers. When they got to the scene of action, they found the Russians shelling the arsenal under cover of the railway embankment.

No movement was made till eleven o'clock, when a Russian shell exploded in the principal Chinese magazine, which contained no less than eighty tons of powder. The explosion was terrific, and for some minutes a great cloud of smoke hung over the arsenal. The shock was so severe that soldiers who were standing up at the time were thrown off their feet by it, and the sound was heard distinctly at Taku, thirty miles away. The British had increased their fire, and shortly afterwards a *Terrible* twelve-pounder put a shell into the

smaller magazine, which also blew up. Each explosion was hailed by the troops with tremendous cheers, which a few minutes later were redoubled when the Chinese were seen leaving the fort. The British and Americans, who were nearer than the Russians, at once advanced at the double. Some Chinese, composed of sterner stuff than their comrades, still kept up their fire, causing some casualties, but they also retreated in good time to secure their own safety.

When the storming party was close to the arsenal, what seemed to be a tremendous musketry fire broke out from the building, and, supposing that there was still a very large force there, the troops halted. Presently, however, the fire ceased altogether, and they again advanced. When they entered the place they discovered that the fire that had checked them was not musketry, but long strings of crackers which the Chinese had prepared to check any storming party, and thus secure their own retreat. Angry as the troops were at being deceived, they laughed heartily at the trick that had been played upon them.

After the arsenal was occupied, a large mixed force of Chinese regulars and Boxers came out from Tientsin city, at the back of the railway-station, and placed themselves between the arsenal and the river, on the very ground the British and Americans had occupied, and their first act was to massacre all the wounded who had been left there. One poor fellow alone was saved, for although he had been very seriously wounded in both legs he managed to run, and the British-Chinese regiment coming up at the moment, he was able to reach the arsenal in safety.

The murder of the wounded exasperated the troops to the last degree, and palliated, if it did not excuse, the general refusal of quarter to the Chinese during the campaign. In Tientsin a document was found showing that rewards had

been paid to several Chinese who had brought in the heads of British and American soldiers.

The capture of the arsenal enabled all the women and children to be sent away within the next few days, which was a fortunate occurrence, for large reinforcements of Chinese troops entered the city the day after, and the settlements were again exposed to a vigorous fire.

Reinforcements were coming up, but even yet the force was not considered sufficiently strong to attack Tientsin. The destruction caused by the Chinese fire was very great; numbers of houses were burnt, many containing stores of great value. In one of these alone, twenty thousand pounds worth of furs and other Chinese produce was consumed.

Rex was maddened by the delay which occurred after the arsenal had been taken. It was a fixed idea among the military men that Pekin had fallen, and its occupants had been massacred. Many rumours to this effect had indeed been received, and Rex found his assertions that the Legations were well able to hold out received with absolute incredulity. He repeatedly urged his opinion on Major Johnston, but that officer said that all the officers in command were so firmly convinced that it was quite useless for him to bring the matter before them.

"You see," he said, "it is now a fortnight since you left the place, and it may very well have fallen by this time. You yourself reported the state of things on your arrival, but so much has occurred since then, and the Chinese have fought so pluckily, that one cannot imagine it possible that the mere handful of men in the Legations can have resisted any determined attack. At the time you left, the news of the fighting here could not have arrived, but I fear that when the fierce fighting here became known, the anger of the Chinese would be raised to such a point that they would

make a general and furious attack on the Legations, in which case you acknowledge yourself that they must have fallen. Besides, however anxious everyone may be for our advance, nothing can be done until Tientsin is taken."

Rex could not but acknowledge the justice of this reasoning. He was strongly tempted to make another journey to Pekin, but so many of Admiral Seymour's messengers had failed that he felt that he could not ask his father's permission to undertake it. He spent his days, whether on or off duty, at the barricades, keeping up a vengeful fire on the Chinese. His love of fun had entirely left him, and his face was as stern as that of the oldest soldier.

"It is horrible, Father," he said, "to think that the girls and all others in the Legation may be massacred before we get there. I won't believe that it has been captured yet, in spite of the numerous reports that reach us; but if we keep on delaying as we are doing now, the Legations may very well have fallen before we get there. I bitterly regret that I came down, for I might, had I remained at Pekin, have succeeded somehow in saving the girls."

"I don't think you could have done so, and you would only have thrown away your own life. You must remember that, dear as the girls are to us, you are naturally far dearer. It is a very serious business attacking Tientsin, and a repulse would be telegraphed all over China and turn all the waverers against us. It would be an awful affair, and eagerly as I long for a relieving force to set out, I feel that it cannot be attempted until we have a force sufficient to ensure the capture of Tientsin, and to be able to fight its way up against the opposition which it will certainly meet with."

"Possibly that opposition will not be serious, Father, when we have once turned them out of Tientsin."

"That is possible, Rex; but I fear that even then there

will be delays. It is a great pity that this force is not under one head, and composed of men of one nation. As it is, every step to be taken has to be discussed and decided upon by the officers in command of the various nationalities. There are, it is well known, all sorts of bickerings and jealousies between them. The Russians want to have everything their own way, and the general opinion is that they are fighting only for their own advantage, and that they are bent upon the destruction of Tientsin and the practical annihilation of the trade of the place, in order to divert the whole of the trade of the north-west to Port Arthur.

"The Japanese interest lies exactly the other way. Here Japan is acquiring a good share of the trade, but if it were turned to the Manchurian port she would lose it altogether. Naturally, therefore, as her force here is about as strong as that of Russia, her generals are not disposed to let the latter entirely have their own way. As for ourselves, our interests are as large as all the others put together, and we have had more than our share of fighting, but unfortunately we have no officer of sufficient rank and command to hold the Russians in check.

"However, at present no preparations whatever have been made for an advance upon Pekin. Nothing is thought or talked of but Tientsin, and yet, after the city is taken, there will be a great deal to arrange before we can move forward. It is certain that the advancing force must move by the river; in no other way could the army be provisioned, for the railway is wrecked from end to end, and I should say that, even with hard work and without opposition, it would take at least a month to restore it to order. Well, it will be necessary to collect a great number of junks—river junks, for the sea-going craft would draw far too much water. Then a great quantity of stores must be got together. It

seems to me that while the troops are waiting here for reinforcements they ought to be making preparations for the advance.

"Of course I am no judge whatever of military matters, but it does seem to me, as it seems to every civilian here, that at least something ought to be done, and that with the force we have here it is disgraceful that we should be doing nothing while our countrymen are fighting for their lives at Pekin. However, I suppose the present state of things cannot last indefinitely. I have no doubt that telegrams have been sent by all the nations in Europe to their military representatives here urging them to make an effort to relieve the Legations, though unfortunately, as we learn from Shanghai, it appears to be almost a settled conviction in Europe, as it is among the military men here, that the Legations have already fallen and all within them perished.

"The Empress of China is the one person responsible for all this mischief. If she had set her face firmly against the Boxers from the first, and issued stringent instructions to her generals to stamp them out, they would never have been formidable. The encouragement that she gave them, and the punishment she inflicted upon the few generals who did their duty and attacked them, has caused this. It was because they were allowed to attack the Legations and destroy the railway that the allies were forced to capture the Taku Forts, and the capture of the Taku Forts at once caused the Chinese army to make common cause with the Boxers. One step has been necessitated by another, and were it not that the viceroys of the Yangtse Valley have declined to obey her commands, and have maintained order in the districts under them, the whole of China would be in a blaze, and every European outside the treaty ports would have been massacred.

"As soon as the affair is over I shall return to Europe, and

remain there for at least a couple of years, for certainly there will be no renewal of trade within that time. You may be sure that every merchant in the Chinese city who carried on dealings with us, and was therefore suspected of being well-disposed towards us, is among the vast number who have been massacred. We know that the quarter inhabited by them has been almost destroyed, and before this can be rebuilt, and a fresh body of men take their places, a very considerable time must elapse."

CHAPTER XV

RELIEF IN SIGHT

ON the afternoon of the 4th of August the British and American troops marched out from Tientsin to Hsi-Ku. The route led through the almost deserted and ruined city, and through villages which straggled away for miles on the northern road. The weather was threatening when the start was made, and heavy rain began to fall when they were half-way out. The roads soon became soft and slippery, and all felt that they would have a bad time of it if the weather continued to be wet. The rain ceased, however, when they reached their destination. They halted at a village near the fort. Here General Gaselee took up his head-quarters, while the British troops bivouacked to the left and the Americans to the right of the road. Orders were issued for an early start, and the troops lay down on the wet and miry ground to get what sleep they could.

The enemy were known to be entrenched in a position extending across the river and railway, their right resting on an embankment running from Hsi-Ku in a westerly direction, their left being five miles away on the other side of the river, at a camp near a railway bridge. Beyond this the country was inundated. The main body of their force was in the centre, where the line crossed the river. Here the position was covered by a series of rifle-pits and trenches, which, being partly concealed by the high crops, would have been very difficult to capture from the hand of a determined

enemy. A grove of trees on the left bank of the river, and within the loop made by a double bend, marked the centre of the position. A battery of artillery was posted on the embankment, and a line of entrenchments across the plain. On the left bank of the river the position was protected by a canal running along its whole length.

It had been arranged that the Japanese, British, and Americans were to advance against the enemy's position on the right bank of the river; that the Japanese were to lead the attack, with the British in support and the Americans in reserve; while the Russians and French, assisted by the guns of the British Naval Brigade, were to operate on the left bank.

The British and American troops had not a very long period of rest, for before the night had passed, the Japs arrived, having started after dark. They marched straight through the village, and the troops there, by no means sorry to leave their uncomfortable quarters, at once got under arms and followed them. All moved forward to the westward under cover of the embankment upon which the Chinese battery stood. It was necessary to capture this before advancing against the main position.

When the orders were issued for the Japs to leave at eight o'clock, Rex had been rather disposed to sleep comfortably at home, and join them in the morning, for he knew that his services would not be required, and as a thunder-storm was coming on just as they formed up, that feeling increased. Finally, however, he made up his mind to march with the troops, and when he found that they were not to halt, but were going straight forward to the attack, he rejoiced that he had not given way to his first impulse. He had brought with him a waterproof sheet and carried his rifle. Ah Lo, who of course accompanied him, had a large bag of provisions

slung over his shoulders. His waterproof, which he wrapped round him, kept him dry during the thunder showers, and the brisk march which the Japanese kept up prevented him from feeling the cold.

"You are not going forward to the attack, are you, master?" Ah Lo asked, as they approached the scene of action.

"No; my father only allowed me to come with the force on condition that I would not take part in the fighting unless the position became so critical that I could not help myself, and really I have no desire to fight. I want to be able to see what is going on all round, and if I were to go forward I should only see the little that happened near me."

Presently bright flashes broke out ahead on the embankment, and these speedily grew into a storm of musketry. As it was still dark the Japanese did not suffer heavily, the majority of the bullets going overhead. Rex climbed up on the embankment, and from there he could see, by their fire, that the Japanese advanced steadily till they were close to the guns. Then they suddenly stopped firing, but two or three minutes later a volley flashed out, evidently but a few yards from the Chinese line. For a moment the two lines became mixed; then, even above the roar of musketry, Rex could hear the cheers of the Japs, and he knew that the guns were won. For some distance the fire drifted away along the embankment, showing that a hot pursuit was being kept up.

It was now three in the morning and there was a cessation of hostilities for an hour and a half. Then, when the Chinese position could be made out, the Japanese and British guns opened fire upon it from behind the embankment. The Chinese replied energetically, but in half an hour their fire began to relax, and soon ceased altogether; it was evident that they were already withdrawing their guns.

Meanwhile the Japanese had been advancing. Supported by a mountain battery on their right, and taking cover in the high maize, they worked up close to the position held by the enemy on the river bank. A little after five o'clock they burst out from their cover with a cheer, and dashed at the outlying trenches. As they crossed the open they suffered heavily from a flanking fire poured in upon them from the grove of trees on the other side of the river. The Chinese in front also stood sufficiently long to inflict severe loss upon them, for they had left the maize in too close formation. Without a halt, however, they held on, sweeping the Chinese before them, and carrying entrenchment after entrenchment. Their cavalry cut up the flying Chinese whenever opportunity offered.

The British and Americans had now come up, and with the Japanese on the right, and the Americans on the left, the combined force worked their way along the river bank.

Occasionally the Chinese offered some slight resistance at long range, and it was expected that they would make a stand at Peitsang, where they had a number of strong positions. But, as at Tientsin, the panic of the first fugitives speedily communicated itself to those behind, and position after position was evacuated, without an effort to retain them, before the steady advance of the allies. The troops moved along the river, clearing out the villages and quickening the pace of the fugitives. At nine o'clock they occupied Nangsung, and as all firing ceased pushed on to Peitsang, which they found deserted, and halted there.

On the left bank of the river the Russians and French had failed to turn the Chinese right in the early morning, as they found that the whole country was flooded there, but the defeat of the Chinese left involved, of course, the retire-

ment of their right, and at nine o'clock the Russians were able to occupy the position on the railway.

Almost the whole of the casualties involved in the battle were among the Japanese, who lost sixty killed and two hundred and forty wounded. The British had four killed and twenty-one wounded, while the Americans, being in reserve, had not suffered at all. The loss of the Chinese was very small. At one point they had lost fifty killed, but very few had fallen in the rest of the entrenchments, owing to their hurried flight. They had been defeated simply because they had lost heart, a fact which promised well for the success of the expedition, for in their flight they had probably communicated their fears to the troops behind them. That in an army of twenty-five thousand men there should have been only a hundred killed was a proof that the courage that had evaporated after their first day's sturdy defence of Tientsin had been by no means restored during the interval that had since elapsed.

The Russians and French joined the rest of the force at ten o'clock, and that day the baggage came up. It was of the most miscellaneous description. There were pack animals of all sorts—horses, mules, ponies, and donkeys; there were carts of all shapes and sizes, from the great American wagons, each drawn by four mules, down to little vehicles like costers' barrows, drawn by little Japanese ponies. Even the Japanese, whose arrangements were far better than those of the rest of the allies, were but poorly provided. They had only intended originally to take a brigade to Pekin, and had brought transport sufficient for that; but when so large a portion of the British force was detained for work in the south, they were obliged to take a division, and consequently a double strain was thrown upon their transport.

On the following morning the main body of the Japanese

THEIR CAVALRY CUT UP THE FLYING CHINESE.

advanced along the right bank of the river, repairing the breaches that had been made in it. The British and Americans, with two battalions of Japs and a battery of field-artillery, were to advance upon Yangtsun; the Russians and French were also to march upon that bank. An early start was made, the Russians and French going on ahead of the British. They followed the line of the river. General Gaselee marched by more direct roads, and, getting ahead of them, came into touch with the enemy at half-past nine. Their position was a strong one, their right resting on a bridge close to the river, in an angle made between it and the railway embankment. Near this bridge were the ruins of Nangsung railway-station, which formed the centre of their position. Their left extended far to the eastward, where the town of Nangsung lay hidden behind a number of villages. Generals Gaselee and Chaffee took up their position on a high sand-hill two miles away from the railway-station, from which they were able to direct the operations.

The enemy's fire was first drawn by a company of Cossacks, who had been sent on ahead of the Russian force to reconnoitre. The main body of the Russians had not arrived, nor had the Japanese detached to co-operate with the British and Americans. Nevertheless, the general decided to attack at once. The 12th Field Battery was brought up on the left, and opened fire on the villages near the railway-station. Under cover of this the infantry attack developed, the British advancing in extended order through the high maize, and the Americans on the left of the railway embankment, covered by the fire of Rally's battery.

While the preparations were being made, General Linivitch came up and explained to General Gaselee that the Russians were advancing on the enemy's right, along the road running parallel with the river. The Japanese detach-

ment also came up. The advance now became general, the British in the centre, the Americans on the right, and the Russians on the left. The British led the direct assault upon the enemy's entrenchments. The 1st Sikhs, who were at the head of the line, moved steadily forward in the face of a very heavy rifle fire, which was maintained until they arrived at a short distance from the railway-station. As usual, however, the Chinese lost heart when they saw that they were about to be charged with the bayonet, and retreated to the top of the railway embankment, from which for a short time they kept up a fire upon the American regiment next to the Sikhs. The front entrenchment was carried just about eleven o'clock, and a quarter of an hour later the fire ceased, the enemy retiring towards Yangtsun.

The Russians passed out to the rear of the captured villages, seized the railway-station, erected a battery, and bombarded the villages round Yangtsun and the town itself. Meanwhile the force on the right were engaged in clearing out the villages in that direction, the Bengal Lancers scattering the demoralized enemy in every direction. Yangtsun was occupied without resistance during the afternoon. The losses had been comparatively slight. The British casualties were under fifty, of which twenty-four were among the Sikhs. The Americans lost seventy-four and the Russians twenty-seven, but these proportionately large numbers were accounted for by the fact that both these detachments advanced in somewhat closer order than the British, who, keeping their line well extended, suffered comparatively little loss, though they were exposed to a heavier fire than the others. The Japanese had taken no part in the engagement, as they had been on the other bank of the river.

The troops were very much exhausted after their two days' marching and fighting in the great heat, and the next day

they remained at Yangtsun, partly for rest and partly to give time to the junks to come up. A council of war was held, and it was decided that the road should now be left, and that the whole force should proceed on the right bank of the river. The Japs were to lead the advance, the Russians were to follow, the Americans to come next, and the British to bring up the rear.

During the day Rex went out to look at some of the captured villages, but he was so horrified by the number of peasants whom he found lying dead that he soon returned to Yangtsun. The Russians appeared to have killed everyone they met, whether soldiers or quiet peasants. The Americans, in the villages they had taken, had acted very differently. In these places he found that the peasants had not been molested. He had himself been with the detachment of the Japanese that joined the British, and had therefore been a witness of the fighting.

"I cannot say much for your countrymen, Ah Lo," he said. "If they are not going to fight better than they have done, they had much better have cleared off the road altogether and left it open for us to go quietly to Pekin."

"Chinaman no good to fight," Ah Lo said contemptuously. "Fight well enough at distance, but no good when they see that Europeans always come on in spite of their firing. Very good to kill missionaries, no good to fight soldiers."

"Do you think we shall find the Legations safe, Ah Lo?"

"I hope so, master; but if they go on fighting all the time, instead of same as when we were there, Chinese must have taken nearly all the Legations. I expect all the people are crowded up into British Legation; they make great fight there."

"That is so, Ah Lo; the less space they have to defend, the stronger they become, but they will have a terrible experi-

ence if they are all crowded into the British Legation. The place was full enough when we left. Still, I can hardly hope that, if the Chinese have gone on attacking all the time, we could hold more than our own Legation. The French Legation was almost destroyed before we came away, the Russian Legation could only be held with difficulty, and more than half the Fu had already been captured. I try to think that it is all right, but I am horribly anxious. All the time that was wasted after we had taken Tientsin I was regretting that we had not stopped at Pekin. Our two rifles might not have been of much good, but we should certainly have been of some use, and above all, I wanted to be there in case the Legations were captured. My cousins have their Chinese dresses ready, and I cannot help thinking that there must have been some points that were not attacked where I could have lowered them down from the wall and so escaped into the city. Once away from the fighting, we ought to have been able to find some place of concealment among so many ruined and deserted houses."

"Perhaps they stand out all right," said Ah Lo.

"I hope so, Ah Lo, I hope so with all my heart, but I am terribly anxious, and I grudge even this day's halt, knowing that every hour is of importance, and that even while we are staying here to-day, the massacre may be going on."

Ah Lo had no consolation to offer. He felt that what his master said was true, and that at any moment the catastrophe might occur.

The Japanese started early on the following day. They were already in advance, and for this reason they had been chosen to lead. A halt was made at Tung-Chow, ten miles distant, no resistance having been encountered on the way. The Japanese arrived long before the rest of the allies. They were very fast marchers, and their transport was light and

handy, and able to keep up with the infantry column. The Russians, on the other hand, were very slow marchers. They slouched along as if half-asleep, made very frequent halts, and their average pace rarely exceeded a mile an hour. Consequently the Americans, who followed them, were frequently blocked. The Russians, too, always stopped at a village, thus compelling the Americans to halt on the hot and sandy road. This accounted for the great number of casualties from sun-stroke among the American troops, for the very slow progress made by the Americans and British, and for the great amount of marching which they had to do during the hottest hours of the day, instead of completing their journey before the sun had attained its full strength.

The Japanese generally completed their marches before the sun was high. The Americans seemed to suffer most from the sun, but they marched fast in the early morning and when the heat of the day was over. The British marching was good, and the Indian troops carried themselves well and marched in good order even in the hottest part of the day, though many fell out. As regards uniforms, the British were better off than the others. The Japs wore white, and consequently they were visible for miles, while the British khaki could scarcely be seen at a hundred yards. The Russians were also in white, but their uniforms being always extremely dirty the disadvantage was not so apparent. The Americans, like the British, had khaki, but they seldom wore their coats, and their blue shirts rendered them visible for considerable distances.

On the following day a mixed body of Lancers, Cossacks, and Japanese cavalry scouted the country ahead and came in contact with the enemy half-way to Ho-hsi-Wu, where it was expected that the Chinese would make another stand. The main body halted and encamped, and the Japs threw out

outposts. During the day two squadrons of Bengal Lancers came upon a force of four hundred Chinese cavalry, whom they charged, killing forty or fifty and capturing their standards.

The British always came in a long time after the rest of the force. They followed the winding of the river to protect the junks which were carrying up the heavy guns intended for the siege of Pekin. It was fortunate that forage was plentiful for the cavalry and the animals of the artillery and transport. The millet was standing high, and as frequently a large extent of this grain had to be cut down to make a clearance for a camping-ground, there was abundant fodder to supply all the demands. The junks came up very slowly, towed by lines of coolies on the bank, and their late arrival frequently excited great exasperation among the troops, who were dependent upon them for their supplies.

Ho-hsi-Wu was a small village, near which was situated an arsenal stored with an enormous quantity of gunpowder as well as a supply of guns of the latest pattern. The Chinese had made an attempt to divert the course of the river by digging an enormous trench in the direction of some low-lying ground. Fortunately they had not had time to complete the work, for not only would it have still further lowered the river, but it would have rendered an attack on the village difficult, as the trench was twenty feet deep, and from twenty to thirty feet wide. As it was left it was still above the level of the water, and could be crossed easily. The village was therefore captured after only a slight resistance.

The scene on board the long lines of junks was interesting, and, to a looker-on, amusing. Two or three times Rex handed his horse to Ah Lo and took passage in one of the junks. These, of course, were guarded by soldiers of the various

nationalities whose supplies were on board. All did their best to urge on their coolies, and as collisions were frequent, and boats every now and again ran ashore, the hubbub of shouting in five or six languages was appalling. Rudders were smashed, bulwarks crashed in, and damage done in every way, but the crowd of lubberly craft pushed on in spite of the confusion that everywhere reigned.

The Japanese had unquestionably the best of it. They were comfortably settled down with their hospital erected before the Russians lumbered up. Everything they did was as well arranged as if they had been at home, and Rex could not but admit that these little soldiers were far ahead of those of any European country in point of organization, discipline, and the quickness and cheeriness of their movements. No looting was allowed among them, and very few outrages indeed were committed by them on the unfortunate peasantry. In this respect they compared very favourably with the troops of all other nationalities, even including our own, although General Gaselee set himself strongly against such acts, severely punishing such offenders as could be brought to justice.

On the tenth the Japanese again pressed on, their outposts getting to within a mile of the retreating enemy. General Fukushima, the moving spirit of the pursuit, was asked in the evening if his troops were not very tired.

"Yes," he said grimly, "and so are the enemy."

This was the spirit in which he carried on the movement. The enemy were to be kept on the run, no time was to be given them to recover their spirits. They were even worse off than their pursuing enemy, for they had no commissariat, carried no provisions with them, and had to feed upon what they could gather at their halting-places, which was seldom more than melons and millet from the fields.

The Japanese cavalry and infantry halted about three miles in advance of the main body. When the rest of the infantry came up, they were extended and searched all the villages near the line of march. This done, the cavalry again went on ahead for some distance, and the process was then repeated.

In this way the army marched down to Matou. It was a long march, and the troops all suffered terribly from the heat, with the exception of the British, who were wisely kept at their last halting-place until late in the afternoon, and came on in the cool of the evening. The main body of the force bivouacked at Matou, the Japanese camp being three miles farther ahead.

The next morning the Japanese arrived at Chan-Chia-Wan. The day was cooler than the preceding one, and some rain fell, affording great relief from the heat. The Japanese reached the place at eleven o'clock, and sent on a strong detachment of cavalry, infantry, and artillery to reconnoitre. They discovered the enemy in a position south of Chungtaw. At about two o'clock the Japanese brought up some more artillery and shelled the place, whereupon the enemy retired into Tung-Chow, a large and very wealthy city only thirteen miles from Pekin. The next morning the Japanese entered Tung-Chow without meeting with any resistance and took possession of half of the city. The rest of the allied army arrived somewhat later, and at once began to loot their portion of the town.

All the river trade down to Tientsin passes through Tung-Chow, which contains even richer pawn-shops than Pekin itself. These are very important institutions in China, not only because of the richness of the securities on which money is advanced, but because they are used as storing-places for valuables by the general public, and contain immense quan-

tities of jewellery, costly furs, jade, and works of art of all sorts and descriptions.

The greater part of the lower class of the population had remained in the city, and they joined in the general looting, which was carried on everywhere whenever they saw a chance. Officers in vain tried to keep their men in control in the narrow streets, but in the Russian section the soldiers were allowed to do just as they pleased, and they gave themselves entirely to looting, rapine, and crime of every kind. The reports of the flying Chinese soldiers had aroused in the people an intense fear of the foreign devils, and so when the troops arrived at a town or village many of the inhabitants made away with themselves to avoid the outrages of a licensed soldiery. Women threw themselves out of windows or drowned themselves in wells, indeed whole families often committed suicide in order to avoid a worse fate. Thus, although very many terrible outrages were committed, these accounted for but a small proportion of the deaths among the Chinese people.

The British camp was at the edge of the river, and the soldiers were not allowed inside the town, and stringent orders had been given against looting. Had the other generals taken the same view of the matter, the campaign would not have been disgraced by the plundering and murder of innocent people. The British general was proud of his troops, and justly so.

Rex had secured a room in the quarter held by the Japanese and enjoyed a good sleep. He was greatly grieved at the awful destruction that went on in the town, and he could not but wonder at the cowardice of the Chinese in evacuating, without striking a blow, a place whose walls were at least as strong as those at Tientsin, and leaving its enormous wealth to the enemy. He got up early in the morning and

rode out. The sun had not yet risen, but the narrow streets were filled with the scum of the town, who, invisible the day before, had now returned in numbers, bent on looting the houses of their more wealthy countrymen who had forsaken them. Filthy beggars and coolies staggered along under the weight of furs and rolls of silk. The front of nearly every house was broken in and its contents turned topsy-turvy. The allies had taken the pick of the goods, but vast quantities remained for any who chose to carry them away.

The changes of fortune that twenty-four hours had wrought were extraordinary. Rich men had become beggars, beggars had acquired that which made them wealthy.

Rex let his horse help himself at the grain shop; the day was likely to be a heavy one, and the rations served out were but scanty.

"Now, Ah Lo," he said, as he joined the Japanese troops, who as usual started before daylight, "this is the last day of the march. By to-night our suspense will be over and we shall know what has happened."

The Japanese had reason to be proud of themselves. General Yamaguchi, on entering the town, issued a proclamation promising protection to non-combatants, and telling the people to remain in their houses. It was unfortunate indeed that the Japanese had not occupied the whole of the city. If they had, the scenes that have disgraced the nations would have been avoided.

The Japanese advanced by an old stone causeway leading to the eastern gate of the Tartar City, the Russians by a road more to the south, but north of the canal, and leading to the northern gate of the Chinese city. South of the canal were the Americans, and still farther to the south the British. It had been arranged on the previous evening, at the meeting

of the generals, that the column should halt a short distance from the city. This arrangement, however, was broken by the Russians, who marched close up to the city walls, and, meeting with no opposition and thinking that a surprise might be effected, advanced up to the gate. Here, however, they were met by a heavy rifle fire, which killed and wounded many men. They could not well retire, and their message begging for reinforcements was the first intimation of what had occurred. A subsequent rumour stated that they had succeeded in entering the city, and the other generals, annoyed at the trick by which the Russians hoped to have the glory of being the first to get into the city, at once marched forward with all haste and without consultation.

The Japs had, as agreed, halted at a village three miles from the eastern gate, and in one of the dwellings attached to a joss-house, or temple, Rex and a few Japanese took shelter. As night came on, a drizzling rain began to fall. At nine o'clock desultory firing was heard to the east, and half an hour after, a few shots somewhat nearer came from the direction of the eastern gate. Later, the fire increased, and the Japs got under arms. As the night was very dark it was impossible to tell what was going on, and, mindful of the arrangement that had been made, they could not attempt to advance. Just before daylight they started again, and then Rex learned of the trick the Russians had played, and that a messenger had arrived begging Fukushima to send reinforcements. The officer who brought the message said that if the Japanese joined the Russians the combined force could succeed in making an entrance through the wall into the city.

Fukushima replied: "What about the Americans and the British?"

The Russian officer shrugged his shoulders and said: "Why

should we trouble about them when we can do without them?"

Fukushima replied angrily that he had undertaken to attack at a certain time, and that he should stick to his undertaking.

"This is a pretty bad beginning to the day's work," Rex said to the Japanese officer who was marching alongside.

"I wish we had come without the Russians at all," the officer replied; "they have brought disgrace upon us all by their infamous doings. They have worked on their own account since they started. They are surly brutes, and I would infinitely rather fight against them, as I have no doubt we shall have to do some day, than against these poor beggars of Chinese. It is perfectly scandalous that, after making an agreement only last night that we were to hold a council this morning and arrange for an attack in unison, they should sneak forward and try to get all the glory themselves."

CHAPTER XVI

THE CAPTURE OF PEKIN

THE day was just breaking as the Japanese moved forward. Rex rode with their advance guard, which was moving along on the road with flanking parties in the woods close by. Suddenly there was a sound of rifle shots in the woods, and bullets whizzed through the air overhead. The column at once broke up, and, taking shelter among the bushes, began to advance in the direction of the firing, which became heavier every moment. It was a complete surprise, for no idea had been entertained that the Chinese would advance beyond the protection of their walls.

The main body behind had halted. Some wounded men were carried out of the woods, but they could give no particulars as to the force that had attacked them. Presently a mounted Russian officer dashed out from the wood and rode up to the head-quarter staff, where he shouted to Fukushima that the Russians and Japs were firing upon each other.

Orders were at once given to cease firing, and investigations showed that the affair had been caused by a few Chinese lurking in the wood, who had fired upon the Japs. The Russians, whose movements were unknown to the Japs, were advancing on the other side of the wood, and the Japanese bullets flying over their heads led them to believe that they were attacked by the Chinese, and so the two allied forces skirmished briskly with each other until the mistake

was discovered. Unfortunately several men were wounded on both sides, and two Russians killed.

As soon as the matter was cleared up the Japanese resumed their forward march, and in a short time, on rounding the base of a small eminence, they saw the great wall of Pekin and the massive gate-house.

For a quarter of a mile outside the town extended a labyrinth of narrow streets. The road ran straight through these to the first gate leading through the great tower. To reach this the wide moat, crossed by a great stone bridge, had to be traversed. The gate itself could not be seen, as the road made a sharp angle at the tower, and therefore guns could not be brought to play upon it until they were close up. Beyond this gate was a large yard, and from this opened the inner gate of the wall itself.

Not a soul was to be seen in the streets, and the Japanese moved forward with a general feeling of expectation and wonderment. Why did not the Chinese open fire? They were within short range, and yet there was no sign whatever of the foe.

They began to think that, as at Tung-Chow, the entry was not going to be opposed, when suddenly, as they rounded the bend, a tremendous fire broke out from the walls and a storm of bullets smote the column. Pending orders, there was nothing for it but to rush for shelter, and the dispersal of the solid battalions resembled that of a crowd when a thunder-shower breaks suddenly overhead. For a time nothing could be done. Crowded in the little houses, the troops waited for the engineers, who were to blow up the gate, to complete their work.

Rex, by stooping low, made his way forward until he reached a point where he could watch what was going on in front. Here he could see the little Japanese soldiers cheering

as they advanced, running forward towards the gate under a tremendous fire of musketry. Of the first detachment more than half fell before they had gone many yards, but others pushed on until almost the last man had fallen. Attempt after attempt was made, the brave fellows going forward as cheerfully to almost certain death as if to a fête. It soon became evident, however, that success could not be attained even at the greatest sacrifice of life, and twenty minutes after its commencement the attack was given up.

Nothing could now be done until night fell and afforded a screen for the forlorn hope to get up to the gate. The Japanese artillery were brought up and placed on some elevated ground beyond the suburb outside the wall, and opened fire on the gate and its surroundings. Meanwhile the troops were withdrawn from the houses near the walls, and, scattering among those at a safer distance from it, lay down and waited for further orders.

Rex went out with Fukushima to the hill on which the Japanese guns were preparing to open fire. There were no fewer than sixty-four of them, for the most part quite small, and these were soon all at work pounding the great tower and the wall. It was not long, however, before it became evident that the massively-built structure was not to be seriously injured by such puny missiles, and while the larger guns were still kept at work the smaller ones were turned upon the city wall. As a result the enemy's musketry fire diminished, and soon only an occasional shot rang out from the wall. The Chinese fired a few shells in reply, but strangely enough they did but little in that way, although the outlying suburb might very speedily have been set on fire and the Japs driven out from their shelter.

The Japanese fire continued for six hours, but even at the end of that time the gate-tower, although its face was closely

pock-marked by the balls, had not been seriously damaged. The day passed slowly, and it was a relief indeed when, as darkness came on, the men again moved up into the houses on the main road and in the lanes branching from it. After all were ready they were still kept waiting, but at last two loud explosions were heard. The engineers had done their work, and in a few seconds the Japanese were swarming out of the houses and going forward at the double, keeping time as they went to the cheerful cry of "One, two; one, two," with which they always advanced. But the Chinese were not taken unprepared. A storm of fire broke out from the great tower and the battlements on the walls, as heavy as that which they had encountered in the morning. But happily it was to a certain extent a random one, for although the moon had just risen, its light was not sufficiently strong to enable the defenders of the walls to make out the advancing enemy with any accuracy. Nevertheless, the middle of the road was so swept with fire that the Japs, as they advanced, had to take what shelter they could in the houses on either side. As they got to the last broad open space they halted at the corner and then went forward in batches, cheering and singing. Many fell, but many also reached the gate, and once under the wall they were in shelter from the fire. The leading parties, dashing through the gate which had been blown down, speedily drove back those of the defenders gathered there. The gate-house was soon captured, and the troops, as they entered, were marched up to the top of the wall, and, following this to the right and left, drove the Chinese before them, the latter, however, offering an obstinate resistance at each bastion.

From the walls the city appeared a mass of ruins. The continuous fire of the Japanese guns had created immense destruction; large spaces had been swept by shot and shell.

At some points a heavy fire was opened from the ruins upon the white-clad column, which showed up very clear in the moonlight on the top of the wall; but this form of opposition presently ceased. Great fires could be seen burning in the direction of the Legations, and the column pressed on, anxious to be among the first to arrive there. Just at midnight, however, they came upon a Russian picket on the wall, and to their disappointment learned that the Legations had been relieved in the afternoon. They pressed on, however, and at two o'clock entered the Legations.

The general and his staff stopped at the Japanese Legation, but Rex and Ah Lo pushed on over barricades and ruins to that of the British. Here they found almost every square foot of ground occupied, but they made their way among the sleepers until they reached the hospital. Here alone there were signs of life; lights shone in the windows. Rex, knowing the way well, moved quietly into the kitchen. Fires were still burning, and kettles and pots were boiling. On the floor, with her head resting on a chair, Mabel was sitting fast asleep. Feeling sure that Jenny was assisting in the wards, he remained quiet for a minute or two until the head nurse entered with a can for water.

"Ah, Mr. Bateman!" she exclaimed as she saw him, "I am indeed glad to see you. Your cousins have been very anxious about you. We have nearly finished in the hospital now, and shall get an hour or two's sleep, I hope. I will send your cousin out to you at once."

"No, thank you!" said Rex; "now that I know they are both well I am quite content to wait till morning, but I should be obliged if you would let Jenny know that I have been here."

"I shall be very glad to do so."

"We have been practically two nights without sleep," said

Rex, "and now I know that the girls are well, I feel that I have only to find room enough to lie down somewhere, and I shall be off to sleep almost before my head touches the ground."

"I cannot ask you to stop here, Mr. Bateman, for our regulations are very strict."

"Thank you! I was not thinking of that, and indeed I should much prefer the open air."

He joined Ah Lo again, and, lying down on the ground close to the entrance of the hospital, he fell asleep almost immediately.

Although the Japanese had done by far the heaviest fighting and suffered the greatest loss, the other allies had in some cases had serious fighting. The Russian attack, although it had been made in defiance of the agreement entered into, that no advance whatever should be made against the city until all the allies had arrived at the positions assigned to them, was a gallant affair, and to a certain extent an accident. Their reconnoitring party, consisting of four hundred infantry and three guns, had pushed forward, meeting with no signs of the enemy until, to their surprise, they found themselves close up to the outer walls, at the angle where the walls of the Chinese and Tartar cities join. It was pitch dark when they arrived, and with a sudden rush they disposed of the Chinese guard on duty on the bridge immediately outside the Tung Pien gate, and then blew a hole in the gate itself with their guns. They then mounted on the Tartar Wall.

Up to this time the opposition they had encountered had been very slight, which may be accounted for by the fact that the Chinese were so briskly engaged at the time in an attack upon the Legations that the proceedings of the Russians had really been unnoticed. About this time,

however, the moon rose, bringing into relief the Russians moving on the wall. Immediately a desperate fire was opened upon them. Nearly all the horses with the guns were at once killed, and the infantry, taking their places, dragged the guns back to shelter, near the point where they had entered the city. Urgent demands for reinforcements were then sent to the main body of the Russian force. The refusal of the Japanese to take part in the affair, on the ground that it was the result of a breach of the arrangement arrived at by the allied commanders, paralyzed the action of the Russian general, and it was not until ten o'clock on the following morning that reinforcements arrived.

In the meantime the detachment had been exposed to a continuous and heavy fire, and had been obliged to sally out to defeat a force which advanced with the intention of taking them in rear. The attack, although made contrary to the agreement, was of great advantage to the Legations, for a furious onslaught had been made upon them with the evident intention of destroying them before the allies attacked the city, and therefore releasing the whole of the Chinese force for the purposes of defence. As soon, however, as the Chinese learned that the Russians had entered the gate, a considerable portion of the force round the Legation was withdrawn to oppose their advance, and from that moment the fury of the assault abated considerably.

The British had met with but slight resistance. Their main body had left Tung-Chow at two o'clock on the morning of the fourteenth. When within a mile of the southeast gate, they bombarded a village and drove the enemy holding it into the town, and then advancing they entered the Chinese city, and pushed on until they reached the Chien gate of the Tartar Wall. Here they were welcomed by the allied troops holding the wall near the gate.

They could not, however, let them in, and for a short time the British force were exposed to a galling fire from the Chinese city and from other parts of the wall. The British, however, knew of the water gate which opens into the canal, running up between the Russian and British Legations and the Fu, having received news that it was likely to be unguarded, by a messenger sent out by Sir Claude Macdonald. General Gaselee, therefore, taking with him the 7th Rajputs and a party of the 1st Sikhs, made a dash for this gate, and got through without much trouble.

The Chinese, never dreaming that an attack would be made on that side of the city, had not placed a strong force there, and as soon as General Gaselee had entered by the water gate, a party of Americans and Russians was able without much difficulty to seize the Chien Mên, and so admit the main body of the British force, who were waiting there to enter.

The loss sustained altogether by the allies was small in comparison with what might have been anticipated in capturing a town very strongly fortified and defended by a garrison of courageous men. The Japanese lost about two hundred killed and wounded, the Russians a hundred and twenty-eight killed and wounded, the Americans, who with the French entered the city immediately after the Russians, twenty-four killed and wounded, while the British had but half a dozen casualties.

Rex slept soundly for three hours, and was then aroused by the din going on around him. When he started up he found that, in addition to the crowd who had occupied the place during the siege, numbers of soldiers—Sikhs, Rajputs, and Welsh Fusiliers, Royal Marine Infantry, and sailors, were moving about. Scattered among them were a few men of other nationalities who had missed their columns during the night and had straggled in. Officers and men alike were

endeavouring, with the scanty amount of water at their disposal, to get rid of the dust gathered during the two preceding days. All were talking and laughing in the highest glee at the satisfactory conclusion of their work. Most of them, like Rex, had slept on the ground, for it was impossible to find quarters in the already crowded houses.

Giving himself a shake as a substitute for a wash he went across to the hospital. One of the nurses came to the door.

"You are too early, Mr. Bateman," she said. "Your cousins did not go to bed till half-past two, and we cannot think of waking them till eight. Fortunately not many wounded were brought in with the troops, and almost all our patients have benefited so greatly by the arrival of our friends that we are likely to have a quiet day of it. We did not tell your eldest cousin last night; we thought it best not to do so. They heard, of course, that you did not come in with the British, but one of the officers whom we questioned about it said that you were with the Japs, and would no doubt arrive with them. Your own arrival was the first intimation we had that the Japs had come in, so it was much better to let your cousin go quietly to sleep. Had she known that you were here she would have been wanting to see you, and to hear all about your doings."

"Thank you!" said Rex; "it was much the best way. I should not have thought of coming in last night, but I feared that they would be uneasy when they found that I did not arrive with the British. Of course on the way up I spoke to several of the officers who had been with Seymour's expedition, but the chances are that none of them would come your way. Well, I will go to my friends at the college."

He was received quite joyously by the young men he knew, and as he had only eaten a biscuit on the previous day, some cold food was at once placed before him.

"We have been out of meat for some time," said Sandwich; "only about half a dozen mules are left alive, and they are so desperately thin that it would be useless to kill them; one might as well try to make soup out of a clothes-horse. Here, however, is bread and rice and some jam. During the amnesty we managed to buy a good many things, and among them six pots of jam. This is the last pot, so you see we are treating you royally."

"Rice and jam are not to be despised, only I hope there is enough rice. I should be sorry to place any limit to the powers of my appetite just at present."

"Well, you can eat as much as you like, but eat quickly, for we want to know about everything. We have only heard that there was very little fighting on the way up, and that the Japs did the principal part of it."

"Yes, and I was fortunate enough to see it all, for I came up as interpreter to their head-quarter staff. I can tell you in very few words about our march up here; the principal event was the fighting yesterday. But I must finish eating before I begin talking about that."

After he had made a good meal Rex gave them a full account of the storming of the gate by the Japanese. When he finished, Sandwich said: "Now, tell us how it is that they have been such a tremendous time in relieving us, and also what has happened at Tientsin."

"The first question is easy enough to answer. All the generals made up their minds that the Legations had been captured and the whole lot of you massacred, and it was not until a despatch came down from Conger about ten days before we started, that they really woke up in earnest. But nothing had worked smoothly since the day when they came up to relieve Tientsin. We and the Japs and the Americans got on capitally together, but the others were always raising

difficulties, especially the Russians. The general opinion among us was that they were playing a double game."

"In what way, Bateman?"

"Well, that I really cannot tell you. Certainly their generals altogether opposed the march up, and it was only when Gaselee and Chaffee declared that they would go alone, if none of the others would accompany them, that the Russians had to give way. It was generally believed that they wanted in some way to pose as friends of China, and on the strength of that to get concessions and that sort of thing, and especially to obtain from China the concession of the whole of Manchuria. I have no doubt they will try on that game now, when things settle down again, unless the other Powers back up China."

"It is a rum state of things altogether," Sandwich said.

"Well, tell us all about Tientsin."

"To begin with, then, Tientsin and the settlements have to a large extent ceased to exist."

"What? Was the fighting so severe as that? We have heard nothing whatever about it."

"Yes, it was very severe. As far as actual fighting went, you were not in it here at all. For eight or nine days we were bombarded by any number of guns. The French settlement, which was nearest to the enemy, may be said to have been completely destroyed, the cathedral and mission-houses burned, and the rest of the houses practically knocked to pieces. Our quarters were pounded pretty heavily, but not to the same extent. We were exposed to a continuous fire from the ruins of the Chinese college on the other side of the river, and from all the houses that remained on that side. Of course we had barricades erected at the ends of all the streets, but nevertheless it was not altogether pleasant to walk about in the showers of bullets and shot and shell which

came practically from all directions. The hottest fighting was at the railway-station, where it went on night and day.

"Well, when large reinforcements came up, we took the offensive. The Russians and French did not do much, but the Japs, the Americans, and our fellows had some very hard work. At the end of the first day things looked pretty bad. We were established in the suburb outside the town, but farther than that we could not get, and indeed there was some question whether we should not fall back after dark. This, however, was negatived, but that it should have been even proposed showed that we were really in a tight place. Fortunately, during the night the same question was discussed by the Chinese, and they concluded that as it was evident that we did not intend to go they had better do so, and the greater portion of them accordingly marched away. In the morning we carried the gate between us, the Japs doing most of the fighting, and as soon as we were in, the Chinese bolted like sheep.

"We found that our artillery fire had been most destructive in the town, and that a large portion of the place was in ruins. This, however, was principally the work of the Chinese themselves, who, during the first stage of the affair, acted like madmen. No one knows how many of the people suspected of being friendly to us were massacred; some put it at tens of thousands. At any rate, it was a great many thousands, and the river was literally full of corpses. Besides killing these people they sacked and set fire to their houses, and this way an enormous amount of damage was done.

"The allies, it must be confessed, did a lot of looting. The Japs, all agreed, behaved best; we and the Americans very fairly; but the Russians, who had done practically nothing towards the taking of the town, acted in a most brutal way. Moreover, they actually wanted one of their number ap-

pointed governor. Fortunately, the other Powers would not agree to this, and in the end a commission of three—a Russian, a Jap, and an Englishman—were appointed to manage things. A lot of the Chinese were enlisted as policemen, and in a day or two the place, which was littered with dead, was got into some sort of order. If this had not been done, there certainly would have been a pestilence."

"But what about Seymour's force?"

"They had to fight their way back, and were getting into great straits for provisions, when, luckily enough, by a sudden attack, they captured the arsenal of Hsi-Ku, five miles north of the native town. Here they found a tremendous quantity of weapons and stores, and a big supply of rice, and although the Chinese tried to recapture the place, they were able to hold it without much difficulty until, when the reinforcements came up from the sea, a strong body went out and relieved them. They could hardly have fought their way down without aid, for they had some hundreds of wounded, and a large number of the fighting-men would have been required to carry them."

"And how about the capture of the Taku Forts?"

"Well, I will tell you all about that later. Of course, I did not see that; we were cut off from the sea for some days."

"And what were you doing all that time?"

"I joined the volunteers—every able-bodied man did so—and helped in beating off several attacks on the barrier. I also had a part in some of the fighting at the railway-station, which was about the hottest thing in the whole affair; indeed, we were only saved by the fortunate arrival of a party of Sikhs who came out to take the place of the garrison, and even with their aid it was a close thing, for the Boxers fought with the greatest pluck, and even crossed bayonets with us.

"But there, I have given you now a rough account of it

all; details will follow later. Here is your breakfast coming in. I want to take a turn round and see how matters stood up to the time when we arrived, and after that I am going to see my cousins. I was going to say I suppose you will be all off duty now, but I hear that the firing has broken out again. That shows that although we have got in, the Chinese have not got out, and may give us more trouble before we have done with them. By the way, what has become of the Empress?"

"She bolted three days ago when she heard, I fancy, that you had taken Tung-Chow. I don't know whether it would be wise to send a force in pursuit of her, considering that the town is still full of Chinese troops and that there is so much to be done here. Besides, though she has a tremendous train of baggage with her, it would take some days' march for infantry to catch her, and it would be a risky thing for our small force of cavalry to go alone, as of course she has taken a considerable body of troops with her."

"Yes, I don't think they will pursue her," Rex said. "There must be someone for us to treat with, and if we were to take her prisoner it is pretty certain that, directly we had gone, she would repudiate any treaty she might make, on the ground that it was obtained from her by force. The Chinese never hold to treaties, and this would afford them so excellent an excuse for breaking one that the agreement would hardly be worth the paper it was written on."

"Well, I shall come back about ten o'clock, and then, before I give you any details of what I have seen, I shall expect you to give me a full account of all that has taken place here since I went away."

Rex now went to the hospital again. A nurse went to inform the girls of his arrival, and almost immediately they came flying out.

"We are glad to see you again, Rex," Jenny said; "we have been in dreadful anxiety about you. When you went away we had no idea that it would be so dreadfully long before you came back."

"I did not think it would be myself," he said, "but it has certainly not been my fault that I did not get back sooner. I can assure you that I have been quite as anxious about you as you can have been about me."

"We were so dreadfully disappointed yesterday when the troops came in, to find that you were not with them. We asked a good many officers, but only one knew anything about you, and he said that you were with the Japanese."

"Yes, that was so. It would have been very difficult for me to get leave to come with my own people, but the Japanese were glad of an extra interpreter. Now, how have you been all the time?"

"We have been very well on the whole. Of course we are both thinner, for recently rations have had to be reduced very much; we have had no meat for the past fortnight, and not a great deal of anything else. At the same time we have been kept very busy, for the number of wounded has been large; but we were very glad to be fully employed, for it was much better to be working here than to have nothing to do but make bags to hold earth and sand."

"I can quite understand that. The students were telling me that it was terribly tedious when they had nothing to do. Certainly they were called out to aid the guard at the barriers, when these were heavily attacked, but often two or three days passed without their being summoned."

"And how are Uncle and Aunt, Rex?" asked Jenny.

"They are both well. They have been besieged just as you were here, and there was very hard fighting. The settlement indeed was very much knocked about, but fortunately,

in spite of the severe shelling, hardly any lives were lost.

"We can come out with you now for an hour," said Jenny, "and then you can tell us all about it, and what prevented the army from coming up to help us."

The girls put on their hats and the three sallied forth. As they walked about, Rex gave them a graphic account of the fighting at Tientsin.

"And has Ah Lo come up with you, Rex?"

"Certainly he has. I should as soon have thought of coming without a hat as without him. He is a splendid fellow, and I have got so accustomed to his company that I really don't know what I should do without him."

"It is time for us to go back," Jenny said at last. "We shall be off duty this afternoon at three, and to-morrow or next day we shall leave the hospital, for most of the wounded are convalescent, and unless there is tough fighting the hospital will empty fast, especially now that we can get fresh fruit and meat and other things for the patients."

Rex returned to the room occupied by the students, and there he found Sandwich waiting for him.

"I am feeling like a fish out of water, Bateman," his friend said. "After being in readiness for the past two months to snatch up our rifles at any moment and run out to repel an attack, it seems strange indeed that we can ramble about without any fixed duty, and that our military work is over. Now, then, I will give you an account of what has happened here since you left. I have kept a journal ever since the siege began, so that I can tell you how everything was done in its right order.

"Nothing came of the letters sent in by Prince Ching. It was soon evident that the war party were supreme again, and the fighting went on as usual. One prisoner, who was taken

the day after you left, said that the Empress had issued an edict explaining that the firing of large guns was a dangerous practice and liable to do much mischief, and she therefore ordered the troops to confine themselves to the use of rifles only. There can be no doubt that this curious edict was issued, and it was supposed to have been the result of representations by the inhabitants of the damage inflicted by their gun fire. No doubt this was very extensive, for their fire was always high and every shot that flew over the Legations must have fallen in the city and inflicted damage there. At any rate there was much less firing afterwards, and although the shells did not inflict any very great damage here, it was a relief to be free of them. The gun, however, that was being worked against the defenders of the Fu, distant only about fifty yards, continued to do great damage, and one night the attack of the Chinese was so fierce that the Italian guard posted between the British and Japanese retired, and had the Chinese taken advantage of the movement both the Japs and ourselves would have been cut off and the Fu altogether lost.

"Next day the attack was renewed with great vigour, both on the defenders of the Fu and on the French Legation. At the latter place two explosions took place, the enemy having driven mines under it. The French were forced to retire from the main building, but held entrenchments that they had prepared behind it. At the same time the Chinese made a desperate attempt to force their way into the German Legation. They did actually break into the club and set it on fire, but were driven back at the point of the bayonet. The fire, however, spread, and there was great danger that the defence would be forced. The alarm-bell was rung here, the gates were shut, and everyone stood at his post. The attack was maintained with fury till eight in the evening, then it gradu-

ally ceased, and when the enemy retired they left the French and Germans still holding the remains of their Legations. All night the French Legation continued to burn, and the coolies in the Fu worked unceasingly to extinguish the flames.

"The next day letters were received from Ching urging that the Europeans should all leave the Legations and go to the yamen. The proposition was so absurd that a refusal, of course in polite terms, was sent, as even had the Europeans been inclined to trust themselves to the mercy of the Chinese, they would have been obliged to abandon the native Christians under their protection.

"On the sixteenth another communication arrived from Ching. The night passed quietly. In the morning two Chinese presented themselves at the German Legation. Both said they had come to enquire what we meant to do, and to ask if the Foreign Chinese Secretary would go out to discuss matters with the generals. They explained that orders had come to cease firing on the Legations, and the bugler said that General Nieh had been defeated between Taku and Tientsin and had committed suicide.

"An answer was sent that we did not propose to fire without cause, but that we could not allow the Chinese to continue to build barricades, as they had been doing ever since the first message from Prince Ching reached us. While these letters were being exchanged, Chinese soldiers kept coming up to the barricade unarmed and professing friendship. A French volunteer was foolish enough to get over a barricade and go out. He had better luck than he deserved, for he was taken to Jung Lu's head-quarters, where he was well treated. He was closely questioned as to the state of things in the Legation, and said, in reply, that we were having a first-rate time, enjoying ourselves greatly, and wanted nothing but fresh

fruit. The Chinese thereupon gave him some melons and peaches and sent him back.

"Now I think I must stop for ten minutes and wet my whistle. I have not had as much experience as you in relating adventures, and I find this continuous talking somewhat trying."

CHAPTER XVII

THE STORY OF THE SIEGE

AFTER a short rest Sandwich continued his story.

"All day the Chinese kept coming up to our barricade. Many of them got upon the roofs of the houses near and called out to us professing friendship, and we were obliged to put up sign-boards, warning them in Chinese against approaching too near to our outposts. Evidently the soldiers themselves believed that there was an end to fighting, for some of them actually sold their rifles and ammunition to the Japanese at fifteen dollars apiece. Letters again passed between us and the Chinese. Mr. Conger was allowed to send out a message in cypher. He said that we had been besieged over a month, and that, unless strong measures were taken at once, we were all in danger of being massacred."

"Well, that message really did get through," Rex said. "It was the first positive information that was received in Tientsin that the Legations still held out. So convinced were the military authorities that the Legations had fallen that there was no talk of sending a relief party, and it was proposed to wait till an army forty thousand or fifty thousand strong was collected. However, the receipt of Conger's message made a great stir, and, as I told you, Gaselee and Chaffee said that the English and Americans would go on whether the others did or not, with the result that things were really pushed on in earnest from that moment."

"The generals had no idea of the stuff we were made of,"

said Sandwich. "However, to continue my story. The Chinese now requested that the foreign troops should stop hostilities and abandon the Tartar Wall. To this Sir Claude Macdonald replied by a recital of the events of the past month, and said that he could not retire from the wall, as the Chinese had repeatedly used it as a vantage-ground from which to attack us. He repeated his assurance that the Chinese would not be fired upon unless they first attacked us, and he added a request that vendors of fruit and ice should be granted leave to sell their wares to us.

"We had all still very great doubts as to whether this state of things would continue, and the next morning there was a general expectation that fighting would again begin. The Chinese soldiers, however, fearlessly approached our barricades, showing an absolute confidence that we should observe the truce. One of their wounded soldiers actually came in and had his wound dressed by the foreign doctor."

"During the day a secretary arrived from the yamen to interview the Ministers. He was received outside the gate. He said that the government wished to protect foreigners, and that the German Minister's body had been recovered from the hands of those people who had murdered him and enclosed in a valuable coffin.

"On that day a Chinaman who had been sent into the city returned with the news that General Nieh was dead, and that on July 14th the foreign troops took the native city at Tientsin. This news was duly posted. No doubt was felt that the armistice was the result of the capture of Tientsin. That completely explained matters. It had evidently been regarded as certain that the Chinese troops at Tientsin would be able to hold that city against all attacks, and prevent any foreign troops from moving up towards Pekin. It must have been a frightful blow to them to learn that a

place which they considered impregnable had been captured after but one day's fighting. It must have been an awful facer for Prince Tung and the war party, and Ching and the moderates had evidently again come to the front.

"The armistice continued. A few Chinese came in every day with eggs to sell, which they generally brought hidden in their clothes, declaring that some people had been beheaded for dealing with us. As, however, they continued to come, this was considered only as a device for raising the price. The eggs were a great boon to the besieged, for many of the children suffered greatly from want of proper nourishment. Twice the yamen sent in a present of fruit and vegetables. These were an immense treat, and were divided with scrupulous fairness. Each time two melons fell to our share, and were eaten with solemn and almost religious state. It was something like what I have heard takes place when a party of connoisseurs assemble to discuss two or three bottles of Imperial Tokay of a famous year.

"But while this curious interlude lasted occasional shots were fired at us, and several men were wounded. The Chinese, moreover, though apparently so friendly, continued to strengthen and enlarge their barricades, and it was unsafe to move across open spaces in the defended quarter.

"Now that our anxiety on our own account had lessened, we had time to think of the defenders of the French cathedral. It was evident that the armistice that we were enjoying was not shared by them, for from time to time we could hear outbursts of distant firing. The French Minister had endeavoured in vain to communicate with his countrymen, and beyond the fact that they still held out we knew nothing. Meanwhile letters were constantly received from the yamen, all urging us to leave the city and to retire to Tientsin, or at least to give up the Christian refugees. To these requests

answers were returned in language of the greatest moderation, explaining the difficulties of the course, pointing out that the attacks on the French cathedral continued, and that shots were frequently fired on the Legation; never positively refusing to do as the Chinese wished, but always making excuses for not doing so. This method was in so far successful that the negotiations were kept up until the allied army were within a day's march of the city.

"On July 27 the yamen tried to induce the Ministers to send all the Chinese converts out of the Legations. Pekin, they said, was perfectly peaceful, and as so large a number of converts crowded into so small a space in the hot weather must be causing us considerable inconvenience, they advised that they should now return to their homes in peace and resume their usual occupations. As the coolies, however, had rendered invaluable service during the siege, exposing themselves frequently to danger and labouring with unwavering zeal until evidently exhausted, it was, of course, out of the question that they could be abandoned, and the chief replied that as shots were still fired into the Legations, and the North Cathedral was still being attacked, he could not understand the assertions of the yamen that it would be safe for the Christians to leave the Legations, and asked for further information.

"The time passed very slowly with us. Colonel Shiba had bribed one of the Imperial guards and he supplied us daily with news, which afterwards turned out to be a pack of lies. On July 26th he reported that the allied troops had reached Yang-Tsun on the eighteenth, and that on the twenty-fourth they had fought a battle ten miles south of Tsai-Tsun in which the Boxers were defeated. On the twenty-fifth the force was at Ho-Hsi-Wu and had fought a battle lasting five hours, the Chinese losing in killed and wounded twelve

hundred men. Reports on the twenty-seventh confirmed that news and said that there was a panic at Tung-Chow. All this of course caused a lot of excitement, but on the twenty-eighth a rumour spread through the Legations that a messenger had arrived with a letter from the British Consul at Tientsin. Of course everyone went to the Bell Tower to hear the contents of this letter. It said that twenty-four thousand troops had landed and that there were nineteen thousand at Tientsin, that the Boxer power had exploded there and that there were plenty of troops on the way if we could keep ourselves in food. You never saw such a mad crowd as were assembled on that tower. Here were we expecting to be relieved in two or three days, and now no one could say when the relief would arrive. The abuse poured on the British consul was absolutely unbounded. We afterwards learned that we had reasons to be grateful rather than the reverse. Had he told us the truth, that the officers at Tientsin were at that moment actually discussing whether it was possible to make any advance until the rainy season was over, had he sent this news, there is no saying what would have happened. The disappointment would have been so great that we should probably have attempted some desperate action, with the result that all the Europeans would have been massacred and also the Christian Chinese, to whom the handful of fighting-men available would have been absolutely unable to afford protection. Fortunately, however, we did not know this, and spent our indignation upon the unfortunate consul, who, I hope, is none the worse for the objurgations heaped upon his head.

"But though the disappointment was great, the news woke us up, and an order was at once issued for every household to send in a list of all the stores in its possession, of tea, sugar, white rice, and other luxuries. Up to that time, as you

know, only rice, flour, and meat had been supplied from the general store, every household having used what it had collected at the beginning of the siege.

"On the same day the Chinese government issued an edict condemning two of the progressive members of the yamen to death. There was some fighting also, the Chinese persisting in erecting barricades across the north bridge, which enabled them to enfilade the canal. We did not succeed in preventing them from doing this. All sorts of rumours came in, but what they all meant no one could tell; some of the reports were of the wildest nature. The only certain news we got was that portions of the regular army had left, to aid in repulsing the relief column. Another effort was made by the Chinese to get Sir Robert Hart to telegraph to reassure the Foreign Minister as to the situation in Pekin. This he refused to do, as such reassuring news might induce them to pause before sending out a relief force. On the 1st of August Colonel Shiba received a letter from Tientsin which changed the whole aspect of affairs. It was dated Tientsin, and said that the advance of the troops was delayed by difficulties of transport, but that the start would be made in two or three days.

"During all this time we had not been idle. We had strengthened the wall round the Legation and had dug a deep trench inside the west wall, to cut any mines that the Chinese might attempt to drive from that quarter. We omitted one spot, however—the kitchen of the students' mess—and it was precisely at this spot that the Chinese afterwards drove a mine. One of the customs staff declared that he heard men digging in that quarter, but no one believed him. Another defensive measure was the occupying and barricading of the ruins of the houses on the Legation side of the market. A mail came in with several letters on the 2nd

of August. The reports were contradictory, but it really seemed that the column was at last starting. The supplies had been all stopped now and we were beginning to feel famine, especially the Christian Chinese, who were fed on a mixture of a little grain, chopped straw, and other fodder. It was a very bad time. Except the building of the new defences there was nothing to be done. A good deal of sharpshooting was kept up, but the want of work made the delay hard to bear. The nurses were now suffering from sickness brought on from overwork.

"At five o'clock on August 10th a messenger arrived bearing letters from General Gaselee to Sir Claude and from General Fukushima for Colonel Shiba. Both letters were very brief. They were dated August 8. 'A strong force of allies is advancing,' one said, 'twice defeated enemy. Keep up your spirits.' The other confirmed this news, and mentioned the thirteenth or fourteenth as the probable date of their arrival at Pekin.

"You may imagine the enthusiasm that this news excited. It was the first intimation we had received that the column had left Tientsin. The attacks now became much more vigorous, and on the eleventh the attack on the French and German Legations was more severe than anything we had experienced. The attack on the Mongol Market was also very warm. And all the time this was going on, the Chinese government were writing letters complaining of the attacks made upon them by the defenders. Towards evening the firing became even more furious; there was a general call to arms, and every man turned out. The fusillade died away a little at midnight. At half-past two the boom of heavy guns and the rattle of musketry were heard, and every man and woman in the Legation got up to hear the welcome sound which told that the relief force had arrived outside the city."

"The enemy then made a last desperate attack. Everyone rushed to his post again, but although the firing was tremendous and we could hear the Chinese officers shouting to their men to charge, nothing came of it, and towards morning the fire died away to the usual desultory sniping. Everyone remained in a state of expectancy until, as you know, at two o'clock the troops made their entry. There, I think, Bateman, I have given you a very full account, and shall expect as detailed a one from you."

"You certainly deserve it," Rex said with a laugh, and he then told in full detail the story of his entry into Tientsin, the situation there, the account he had received of the taking of the Taku Forts, the defence of the city, the capture of Tientsin, and the march of the relief column. "There," he said when he concluded, "I think we have both a pretty good idea of what has taken place since we last met. Now I must go out and see for myself the points where the fighting has been fiercest." Wandering about, Rex learned more of the fighting of the past two days. The fire kept up was something tremendous, but the Chinese troops could not be persuaded to leave their shelters. Their officers in vain shouted: "We are many, they are a mere handful; come on!" But the soldiers shouted back in return: "No good." Every word could be plainly heard, for the barricades held by the Customs volunteers in the Mongol Market were only ten or fifteen yards from the Chinese. In the Fu the same thing was going on. Positions held by the Italians and Japs were each of them only twenty yards, and the extreme outpost held by Customs volunteers was but ten yards, from the Chinese barricades.

In the Fu they had hit on a happy expedient. They got a huge supply of empty petroleum-tins, and when the Chinese attack was at its hottest, they set the Christian Chinese to

hammer on them with sticks. The din was something tremendous, and the Italians added to it with wild shouts. Astounded at this terrible uproar, and ignorant of what new weapon of destruction was being brought against them, the Chinese fire dropped at once, and did not reopen for some time.

In the Mongol Market five Customs volunteers stood behind their loopholes, close up to the Chinese position, and as they watched the Chinese officers trying in vain to urge their men forward, they chaffed them with invitations to come in and see the place, and then, when they did not come, advised them to go home and nurse the babies. Nevertheless, fighting with the enemy both in the Fu and in the Mongol Market was a matter of grim earnest. If the barricades there had been carried, those positions must also have been abandoned, and all communication between the British and Russian Legations would have been cut off.

The morning after the troops entered, two mines heavily charged were fired. If the troops had been one day later, there is no saying what the consequences might have been. All with whom Rex had chatted were of opinion that the Chinese were deterred from attacking, not by our rifle fire, but by a superstitious fear that we were keeping some secret means of destruction in reserve. Whether it was that we had mined the ground everywhere, and would blow them all into the air as soon as they crossed our barricades, or whether they feared some unknown, but even more terrible form of death, could not be said, but the men who were ready to endure the deadly fire of our rifles could not be got to make a rush against a position where only some fifteen or twenty men faced them. The Chinese kept up their straggling fire all day, and among others one English lady was hit in the arm, this being the first time that a woman had been struck

since the siege began. Rex learned that out of a total strength of nineteen officers and three hundred and eighty-eight men, including volunteers, thirteen officers were killed and wounded, and sixty-seven men killed and a hundred and sixty-seven wounded. Fighting still went on, but great surprise was expressed that the French did not make any attempt to go to the relief of their countrymen in the North Cathedral.

In the evening, Rex went into the Fu, where the Japanese were for the most part quartered, and enquired of General Fukushima if there was anything that he could do.

"No, I do not think there is anything at present. When we once get out into the city I shall be very glad of your services again. You can, if you like, go with a force I am sending out in the morning to relieve the French missionaries. We know they must be in extreme danger, and it would be a scandal if we allowed them to be massacred after we have entered the city."

Accordingly the next morning Rex started with the Japanese. They made a long detour and approached the cathedral from the other side. They attacked and drove off the Chinese on that side and really raised the siege, but at the same time they heard heavy firing on the other side, and found that the French and Russians had arrived there. Fukushima therefore halted his men, being willing to give the French the opportunity of being the first to relieve their countrymen.

The garrison had had indeed a terrible time, and in spite of the entry of the allied force, the attack had been maintained up to the very moment of their relief. The Japanese had met with resistance on coming through the gate that separated the cathedral quarter from the palace of the Empress. Here they came upon a number of Boxers, who were so occu-

pied by their attack upon the cathedral that they had scarcely noticed the arrival of the relieving force. Taken by surprise, a good many of them were hemmed in, and a machine-gun was trained upon them with terrible effect. Fighting was kept up through the various streets, and continued until they reached the cathedral. The garrison at first refused to admit this unknown band of swarthy warriors, and some explanations had to be exchanged before they could be brought to understand that they had been relieved.

The Catholics would never have remained in possession of the cathedral had not the Chinese municipal officers assured them that they would be altogether undisturbed. When the Boxers first appeared near the cathedral, the governor asserted that he had special orders to protect the cathedral. The regular troops there consisted only of thirty French and twelve Italian marines, who at the last moment, when the danger of the situation could no longer be winked at, had been spared from the slender garrison of the Legations to aid in the defence. This was the force that was called upon to defend the circuit of the walls of the great French establishment, whose circumference amounted to nearly a mile. Within this circle there were no fewer than three thousand five hundred people, the larger portion of whom consisted of children from the orphanages. The adults were formed by the fathers into a body, and armed with spears made by fastening knives to the ends of long poles. The eight muskets, which were all the firearms they had, were distributed among the different sections.

The Chinese authorities threw off the mask on the 10th of June, and on that day the Chinese regulars and Boxers surrounded the place, cut the telegraph wires, and completely isolated it.

At the head of the defence was Mgr. Favier, the heroic

bishop, who by his courage, self-devotion, and zeal, kept up the spirits of the defenders through the darkest days of the siege. He was the soul of the resistance. Under him were six priests, who organized the work of defence and set a noble example to the others. The converts were set to work with pick and spade to assist in the defence, and the whole defensible area was quickly surrounded with trenches and barricades. Ammunition was unfortunately very short, but the priests set some of the converts to manufacture powder and bullets. The shot was not difficult to make, as lead and pewter could be obtained from the roofs and vessels, but both sulphur and charcoal were very scarce. After many failures, however, some thousands of rounds were manufactured. These would have been of no use for distant fighting, but they were sufficient for what at times was almost hand-to-hand work.

The Boxers burnt all the houses in the neighbourhood, threw inflammable pots into the convent and upon the roof of the cathedral, and maintained a continuous fire of musketry and artillery. Fortunately the fire was principally directed against the cathedral, and though that building was sorely battered, but little harm was done to the defenders.

Continual messages were shouted to the converts calling upon them to come out. One note, which was thrown into the trenches on an arrow, ran as follows: "You Christians shut up in the Peitang, reduced to die in misery, eating the leaves of trees, why do you so obstinately resist? We have cannon and mines, and can blow you all up in no time. You are deceived by the devils of Europe. Return to the ancient religion of the Fu, hand over Mgr. Favier and the rest, and your lives shall be saved and we will supply you with food. If you do not do this, your women and children will be cut to pieces."

But although these attempts continued throughout the siege not one of the converts evinced the slightest desire to give in. The worst form of attack was that of mining. The enemy successfully exploded one huge mine, blowing up several buildings, and killing no fewer than eighty children and injuring a still greater number. Four tons of gunpowder were said to have been used, and the result was a huge round hole like the crater of a small volcano, measuring in diameter, from bank to bank, fully ninety feet. Even this did not shake the courage of the defenders, but it warned them of what they had to expect, and all available hands were at once set to work digging very deep trenches to prevent the Chinese from mining under the buildings. In spite of these efforts, however, four mines were exploded inside the compound, but another, which would have been almost as formidable as the first, was prevented from doing the damage that it would otherwise have done by one of the other trenches, though over seventy people were injured by the explosion.

Several other mines besides those exploded were met by countermines driven by the besieged. One mine, however, had escaped observation. This was driven under the foundations of the cathedral, and had the relief been delayed but a day or two longer it would have been fired and would probably have caused the death of a vast number of people, for the building was throughout the siege used as a hospital.

Towards the end of the siege the garrison was greatly annoyed by rockets. These were fired by an ingenious gun, and directed by the Chinese themselves. They rendered any passage across the enclosure dangerous, and set fire to many buildings. Once a brilliant sortie was organized and carried out by the handful of marines and a number of spear-armed converts. They succeeded in capturing a field-piece and

some ammunition, the latter being invaluable during the siege.

But the greatest enemy with whom the garrison had to contend was hunger. Gradually the ration of rice served out to the converts was reduced, and at the end, although but two ounces of rice was all that could be allowed to the Chinese converts, even this would have failed in the course of another two or three days. This miserable ration was eked out in every way. Every green thing, every blade of grass, was pulled up, cooked, and eaten. The last few starving animals, before they were killed, had stripped the bark off the trees as high as they could reach.

The little party of marines had lost heavily. The captain had been killed early in the siege. The lieutenant fell on the 30th of July. He was but twenty-three, but his cheerfulness and devotion had done much to maintain the spirits of the besieged. He had worked night and day, and his death caused the deepest regret among the garrison. Eleven of the soldiers were also killed and most of the others were wounded.

Mgr. Favier wrote: "We wept but once during the siege, and it was on this day. So terrible was the pinch of hunger that half-wild dogs which fell upon the dead Boxers lying round the entrenchments were killed and eaten." The suffering was so great that one has to go back to the siege of Leyden for a parallel. The defenders, when relief arrived, were almost skeletons, living spectres scarce able to drag themselves along, and their rescuers, on viewing the shattered defences, the numerous pits made by the exploded mines, and the worn and pallid forms of the defenders, were astonished that they had been able to hold out so long against a horde of well-armed and determined assailants. Gallant as was the defence of the Legations, there could

be no doubt whatever that it was as nothing compared with that of the cathedral.

As things began to settle down a little the pressure in the Legations was relaxed, the Chinese converts in the Fu and in the British Legation moved out and established themselves in the deserted houses near. Supplies began to come in, especially to the British Legation, where the natives quickly learned that they would be fairly treated. The Japanese were also well supplied, but no native would enter the Russian quarter. The attempts of Russia to pose now as the friend of China were wholly fruitless. Putting aside the atrocities the Russians had committed there, the natives had become well aware of the horrible massacres they had perpetrated in Manchuria, and their occupation of that province had excited so deep a feeling of animosity that even had their behaviour been good at Pekin they would still have been regarded with the greatest mistrust.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONCLUSION

FIGHTING went on for some days, but at last all opposition ceased, and the Chinese soldiers either left the city altogether or, changing their clothes, appeared as peaceable citizens. Rex went round the town and was horrified at the destruction that everywhere met his eye. The portion of the town held by the Russians was infinitely the worst; there the looting had been universal, and the atrocities committed upon the unfortunate inhabitants beyond description. In that part of the city Rex scarcely saw a native in the streets. In the German quarter things were little better, and in the French quite as bad. In those portions of the city occupied by the British and the Americans many natives were moving about, and in many of the streets fruit and other things were exposed for sale on stalls. In the Japanese quarter all was order and regularity. Looting had been prohibited from the first, and stringent orders given for the good treatment of the inhabitants. This had such a good effect that shops were already opening, and stalls lined the streets, and indeed the greater portion of the inhabitants from the other quarters had migrated to this part, where alone they found they would be safe from pillage and outrage. It was a humiliating sight for an Englishman that these swarthy little soldiers, whom the Europeans regarded almost as barbarians, should be so infinitely in advance of the Western troops in discipline, order, and good conduct.

The Americans, on the day following the relief of the Legations, fought their way to the entrance of the Forbidden City; but there they halted, as an agreement had been made that none should enter the Palace grounds until a formal entrance was made by the whole force. The jealousies and bickerings of the various generals had broken out afresh now that their purpose was achieved. The Russians, who had from the first signalized themselves by their brutal treatment of the natives, were now posing as their friends, and were already advocating a retirement. The French, owing perhaps to their supposed alliance with the Russians (though from the beginning they had been conspicuous for doing nothing), followed their lead in this as in all things. The Italians were inclined in the same direction; but the Japanese, British, and Americans were wholly against any movement of retirement until terms had been definitely settled.

After a fortnight's consideration they decided to march through the Imperial Palace, and on the twenty-sixth the troops paraded, the arrangement being that ten per cent of each nationality should take part in the demonstration. They drew up outside the inner gateway. The Russians took up their position in the centre, close to the great stone bridge, the Japanese a little to the left, the British were to the right of the Russians, and the remainder behind them. They had but one band, a Russian one, but there were also some pipers belonging to one of the Indian Regiments. In all there were eight hundred Russians, eight hundred Japanese, four hundred British, four hundred Americans, two hundred French, two hundred Germans, and one hundred Italians and Austrians. Soon after eight o'clock a salute of twenty-one guns was fired by one of our field-artillery batteries, and then, led by the Russians, the force marched through the central archway of the Tien-An-Mên.

The Imperial Hall of Audience, or, as it was called, the Hall of Great Harmony, was a magnificent building. It was here that the Emperor sat enthroned, receiving the homage of his court, on any great occasion, notably New Year's Day, his own birthday, and various other times prescribed by the rigid ceremony of the court. Here he conferred literary degrees and distributed robes of honour and promotions in rank. The hall was over two hundred feet long, one hundred feet wide, and the same height. It stood on a noble terrace of white stone, twenty feet above the level of the courtyard, and was reached by five flights of steps. These were flanked, and the terrace surrounded, by white marble balustrades, both steps and balustrades being excellently carved. A number of huge bronze urns of very handsome design, and two great bronze tortoises, added to the brilliancy of the approach.

Externally the hall was in fair repair, but the ornamentation under the eaves was dirty, and the pillars outside and the woodwork round the walls were sadly needing paint, so that in spite of the fine approach the general aspect was that of shabbiness. Why this should be so under the rule of an all-powerful Empress, with the whole resources of the Empire at her command, was quite unaccountable. One would have expected that everything within the walls of the palace, which is the centre of the Empire, would have been kept in the most perfect order. The same want of repair was evident in the Hall of Central Harmony, the Hall of Precious Harmony, and the various pavilions in the courtyards through which the troops marched. In fact the aspect of all the rooms, halls, and pavilions was disappointing in the extreme. The waiting-rooms were gloomy, and everything was covered with dust. Grass grew thickly in the courtyard, and indeed the whole place had an aspect of neglect and privation. In the Imperial apartment there were superb vases

and ornaments of all kinds, all bearing the same marks of neglect. The general feeling among the troops was one of disappointment. After a stay of an hour or two the troops marched out again. Some small articles were carried off, but there was nothing like general looting, and the mandarins who had remained behind in charge had no reason to complain of the conduct of the troops.

Rex accompanied the Japanese in their march, as being officially in their service, and, like all those who had formed the procession, was greatly disappointed.

"It is really a rotten old place," he said to the girls on his turn. "It looks as if it hadn't been inhabited for a hundred years. It is grimy, dusty, and dark. No doubt there were all sorts of good things in the way of vases, but even these were so dirty and dull that no one would think of looking at them if they were not in the palace. Certainly I did not see anything that I should have cared to carry off if I had been permitted to do so, except upon the supposition that, as they were in the palace they must be valuable. I have seen much better things in the loot taken in the city."

"Well, I am glad to hear you say so, Rex," Jenny said, "for it does seem rather hard that the women who have taken part in the siege should not have been allowed to go to look at all the wonders."

"Well, you have lost nothing, I can assure you," said Rex. "Some of those things I bought are certainly better worth looking at than anything in the palace, at least till it has been cleaned up a bit."

Pekin having been conquered, and the proof of conquest having been given to the Chinese by the march through the temple, the general topic of conversation was what was next to be done. The Empress was, it was known, making her way to Shansi, some hundreds of miles away, and all agreed

that it would be impossible to pursue her there, for even if the journey could be accomplished she would simply make another move, and so evade capture. It was considered probable that she would make an offer to treat, but no doubt a considerable time, weeks perhaps, or even months, would pass before she could bring herself to do so. It was considered certain that sooner or later she must take such a step, for, credulous as the Chinese are, it would be impossible to get them to believe that she was staying at Shansi from choice, and that Pekin was occupied by the allies by her gracious permission. The question was, what would be the end? As a matter of course a huge sum would have to be paid for the expenses of the war. On this point opinion was unanimous. The question on which there were strong differences of opinion was, what else would happen? Would each of the Powers demand a slice of Chinese territory, and undertake the civilization of the huge Empire? One objection to this was that it would sooner or later lead to a general outbreak of hostilities between the Powers. It was probable that the mere work of fixing the respective frontiers would bring matters to a crisis at once. Russia would assuredly demand a far greater share than the others, and, on condition that France would back her, would see that that country also benefited very largely. Austria and Italy would certainly be unable to manage a concession of any size, and, moreover, they had so little interest in the East that they would probably put in no claims. Germany, with her sudden greed for colonizing, would certainly expect a large slice. On the other hand, Japan, Great Britain, and America might be expected to oppose any steps in this direction. None of them had any wish to acquire territory. As traders they desired that all doors should be kept open, and that trade should be free to all. Their interest, therefore, was that

China should remain intact, and should be allowed to advance gradually in the path of reform.

The war with Japan had already given a vast impulse to her life in many respects. Short as the intervening time had been, she had accumulated great stores of modern weapons, and had made considerable progress in the work of turning peasantry into soldiers. It was probable that a second disastrous defeat would show her still more vividly the necessity for adopting European methods. It would assuredly strengthen enormously the hands of the progressive party. Prince Ching and others of the same views would gain power and influence, and obstinate and imperious as the Empress might be, the fact that she had been driven a fugitive from her capital, as the result of following the advice of the war party, could not but impress her strongly. Although all allowed that it would be some time before China recovered from the shock, most of those in the British Legation at any rate, were of opinion that it would finally be of immense benefit to her.

The arguments were sometimes quite heated, until some calm listener suggested that months might elapse before any preliminaries of peace were agreed upon, and it was scarcely worth while to get excited over a future which really no one at present could in the slightest degree foretell.

Before starting, Rex had been furnished by his father with a considerable amount of money.

"There is sure to be a great deal of looting," Mr. Bateman said, "and, as is always the case in such circumstances, the soldiers are altogether ignorant of the value of the things they have picked up, and will be ready to sell them for a mere song. The two things to keep your eyes upon are really fine vases, old ones of course, and furs. The Chinese don't mind what they give for good furs, so that their possessions in this

line are of immense value. There are also silks and things of that sort, but they are not so saleable as furs, and I should advise you to stick to these and cloisonné vases."

All the time he was able to go about the city, Rex had carried out his father's instructions. The Russian soldiers had pillaged every shop in their district, and among these, as at Tung-Chow, were enormous quantities of valuables of all kinds, many of which they had been ready to dispose of for a few dollars to the first comer. Rex was therefore able to procure a large quantity of valuable furs, fine vases, jade, and jewellery. In the British quarter all loot found was handed over to the military authorities, who sold it by auction every two or three days. Here the more valuable goods went for a song; fox-furs worth a couple of hundred pounds fetched only seven or eight, and vases were equally cheap, as the difficulty of carriage deterred most of the buyers from bidding at all. On the other hand, small articles which could be taken home as curios, and in memory of the siege, were eagerly bought up by soldiers and non-commissioned officers at prices far beyond their intrinsic value. The missionaries were very active in obtaining loot,—which they also sold for the most part by auction,—and justified their action by saying that the money would be used in rebuilding their ruined chapels and mission-houses. All this and much more that took place during the war was in direct defiance of the treaty to which China, as well as all the allied powers, was a party. This forbade the ill-treatment of private persons, the forcible entry into their houses, the taking of their goods; but the allies considered that the Chinese, by their massacre of thousands of Christians and of numbers of missionaries, together with their attack upon the settlements, had so broken the treaty as to put themselves quite out of court. It must be admitted, however, that the conduct of the troops,

especially of the Russians, Germans, and French, cannot but have greatly heightened the hatred felt by the Chinese for the "foreign devils."

Rex had no difficulty in hiring coolies to bring home his purchases, and the girls were astonished at the mass of valuables he brought to the little room they now occupied. They were, of course, ignorant of the real worth of these things, but they could not but know that the silk and satin mantles, lined with lovely furs, must be of considerable value. "However are you going to get them all down, Rex?" asked Jenny.

"Well, I intend to buy a couple of carts, and of course I shall hire coolies to drive them. When we have got all the things stowed away in them we will cover them with some rough cloth, and then you can sit one in each; that will be much more comfortable for you than riding, for, as you have told me, you have never been on a horse's back in your lives, and besides it would be next to impossible to buy decent horses here."

"Yes, it would be a great deal better. When do you think we shall be able to leave?"

"I hear," he said, "that the day after to-morrow a convoy is going down, and that all women who have not husbands here can accompany it. I think, therefore, that we may as well go. There is nothing whatever to keep us here, and as far as I can see nothing is likely to be done for a long time, perhaps months. The Empress is hundreds of miles away, and it is certain that it will take a long time indeed before the terms of any treaty can be settled. I shall make arrangements for our joining the convoy. We certainly cannot take much time to pack. Ah Lo and I have horses, and I will this afternoon try to pick up a couple of carts. There is no buying them here, but I will ride out with Ah Lo to some of the

villages round, where I have no doubt I shall be able to get what I want.

"There will, of course, be an infantry escort with the convoy, and we shall therefore travel at a walking-pace; besides, there must be a number of wagons to carry stores for consumption on the way. We shall therefore have no difficulty in keeping up with the rest."

An hour later he rode out with Ah Lo. Both carried their rifles slung behind them, and Rex, in addition, took a revolver. It was certain they would not be able to buy carts in any of the villages, as these were entirely deserted, except by a few old people, within a circuit of some miles round the city. They therefore rode a considerable distance into the country. As they went along they saw in the distance a Russian column, which they had heard was to start an hour before they rode out. As it was certain that nothing would be found anywhere near that column, they were about to turn off and ride in another direction, when they saw four Russian soldiers come out of a shed, in which they had apparently been hiding, and go into a neighbouring village.

"Those rascals have evidently hidden," said Rex; "probably the column halted here and they slipped into that shed intending to do some plundering on their own account and to fall in again as the force returns."

The village was but two hundred yards from them. Suddenly they heard loud and piercing screams coming from that direction.

"Come on, Ah Lo, those villains are up to some rascality. Some of the villagers have fallen into their hands."

Setting their horses to a gallop they dashed into the village. The screams were coming from a house of somewhat superior appearance. Leaping from their horses they

ran in and discovered four or five women struggling wildly against the Russians.

"Leave those women alone, you scoundrels," Rex shouted.

With savage oaths the Russians turned round, and, seeing that it was but a civilian with a native who accosted them, they caught up their muskets. Rex had not time to unsling his rifle, but he drew his revolver and, as one of the Russians raised his musket to his shoulder, fired. The ball struck the man in the forehead and he fell back. One of the others fired at once, but as he did not raise his musket to his shoulder his aim was not true, and the shot passed through Rex's coat without touching him. Ah Lo, who had by this time unslung his rifle, shot the man dead. The other two, with a howl of rage, rushed at them. The Russians always carried their bayonets fixed and relied upon them rather than upon shooting. Ah Lo had not time to recock his piece, but, using his rifle as a club, struck aside the thrust aimed at him. The impetus of the charge brought the two men together and, simultaneously dropping their guns, they grappled in a fierce wrestle.

Rex had fired again as his opponent rushed at him. It was but a snap-shot, but the bullet went through one of the Russian's wrists, and caused his thrust to swerve. The bayonet ripped open Rex's clothes, inflicting a slight wound along his chest as it passed. The force of the blow, however, threw Rex upon his back. The Russian, standing over him, raised his musket to strike, but as he looked down Rex again fired. The bullet struck the man between the eyes, and he fell a lifeless mass, completely knocking the breath out of Rex's body. It needed all the lad's strength to roll the body off and to gain his feet. The combat between Ah Lo and the Russian had just terminated. The latter was a big and powerful man, but he was no match for the Chinaman, who,

having gripped his adversary by the throat, held on until he had choked the life out of him. To make sure, however, he at once picked up his rifle and put a ball into the man's head.

"Perhaps he is dead, master, perhaps not. No good leave him to get round again."

The women, as soon as the Russians had released them, had fled upstairs. Rex called out to them in Chinese to come down, but it was not until he had called three or four times that one timidly descended. Seeing the four Russians lying dead, she fell on her knees and poured out her thanks, and the others, perceiving that all was well, at once came down.

"Look here," Rex said, "I don't want any thanks. I have only done my duty as a man. Now you must at once hide these bodies somewhere. There is a ruined house next door, we will carry the bodies there at once and topple one of the mud walls over them. Then you must come back here and clean up the floor, and afterwards take refuge in the place where you were hiding when the column came along. It is hardly likely that they will miss these fellows, but if they do they will be sure to search all the villages they pass through on the way back."

A quarter of an hour's work sufficed to obliterate all traces of the conflict, and Rex and Ah Lo rode off amid the blessings of the women they had rescued.

"It is lucky for those poor creatures that we came along, Ah Lo. I can't say I feel the slightest regret at having to kill those Russian scoundrels."

"They are very bad men, the Russians," Ah Lo said; "they rob everyone, do very bad things wherever they go."

"Well, I need not say, Ah Lo, that we must keep this affair a strict secret. If it were discovered there would be a frightful row over it. I think before we go any farther I will

dismount. That bayonet has certainly cut a gash across my chest. I have been too busy to think about it, but I feel now that it is bleeding."

The wound, which was in no way serious, was bandaged up and they resumed their ride. After going for two or three miles farther they came upon a village where some of the cultivators still remained, and these were well pleased to sell three carts and six mules. The carts were primitive vehicles, consisting of a pair of great wooden wheels, a pair of shafts, and a long framework. On this was what resembled a great box, which could either be used for the conveyance of two passengers or filled with goods. In the former case the jolting over the rough roads was so unbearable, and indeed dangerous, that the sides and roof had to be padded with thick mattresses. The framework projected beyond the body of the cart, and goods could be lashed there when the box was used as a carriage. Rex decided that a mattress should be placed here for the girls to sit on, both because it would be infinitely more comfortable than being boxed up, and because the interiors would be filled with his purchases.

After some bargaining he succeeded in persuading three of the villagers to go with the carts, promising them, in addition to their pay, the gift of the conveyances and mules on their arrival at Tientsin.

The girls went into screams of laughter when he arrived, late in the afternoon, with these conveyances. The three weeks that had elapsed since their relief had done wonders for them, and they were now full of fun and life.

"You don't mean to pack us away in those big boxes without windows or openings of any sort?"

"I certainly do not," Rex said, "I shall put a mattress on that projection behind them, and you will ride there quite comfortably. To-morrow morning I will buy some thick

cloth or canvas, and you can sew it together and make a little tent. It will only require to be high enough to allow you to crawl into it, and wide enough to enable you to ride side by side."

The next morning Rex's purchases were packed in the three carts. This was done with great care, and when it was finished they had nothing more to attend to. They had practically no personal baggage, for the girls had only the clothes they stood in and a change, most of which they had made for themselves on their arrival at Pekin. In the interval before starting, therefore, they went round bidding good-bye to all the friends they had made during the siege.

"What are you all going to do?" Rex asked his friend Sandwich.

"I have not the least idea, and I don't suppose anyone else has. They can hardly expect us to begin work again until everything is settled. In a short time, however, I suppose we shall get so accustomed to this sort of thing that we shall really prefer being at work again to doing nothing. Possibly they may move the college down to Tientsin, or even to Shanghai, but I should think it would be better to keep it here. We may feel pretty certain of one thing, that when peace is once established the guard for the Legations will be much stronger than before. In that case I don't see why the college should not remain here. Of course it will be rather hard at first to settle down to grinding away at the language after all the excitement of the past three months. If, as the result of the negotiations, more ports are thrown open, it would be a good thing for us, for of course more officials will be required. As one of the seniors, I should be pretty sure to get a berth, whereas I might have to wait for two or three years in the ordinary course of things."

"Well, if you do come down to Tientsin for a run, I expect that you will find me there, Sandwich, and in that case you must make our place your home. Of course I have no idea of what my father will do. It is quite on the cards that he may decide to go home for a bit. Business will certainly be at a stand-still for a long time, and he may take advantage of the lull to run home for a year or two. Whether I shall stay at Tientsin or not is, of course, equally uncertain. This row has so completely turned everything topsy-turvy that I have no idea what will come of it."

In the evening Rex called upon the Minister to tell him that he was going down with the convoy.

"You are quite right to do so, Mr. Bateman; there is no chance of any further fighting here, and you will naturally wish to be with your family at Tientsin. If you will sit down for a few minutes I will write a sort of testimonial saying how valuable have been your services here. I don't say that such a testimonial will be of value to you as a merchant; still, it may be of use, and in any case it will be something to be proud of and a record of your doings during the troubles."

Sir Claude went into an inner room and dictated a letter to his secretary. On his return he handed the document to Rex, who thanked him very heartily, saying that it was a testimonial that he should be proud of to the end of his life. At an early hour next morning the convoy of wounded and sick, and women and children, left Pekin. The girls were seated on a mattress behind the first of the three carts. Rex had bought two great umbrellas which shaded them from the sun's rays. They had with them a basket containing fruits, meat, and bread. Swinging under the body of the cart was a hamper containing charcoal, a tea-pot, plates, cups and saucers, and tea, and slung beside it was the little

tent that the girls made, with the sticks for its support.

To the girls the journey was most enjoyable. There was practically no fear of trouble, for after the capture of Pekin strong parties had been sent down and had dispersed the Boxers along the line of railway. Still, there was the risk that they might fall in with isolated bands to add interest to the march. At times they got down and walked, joining one or other of the friends they had made during the siege. Of an evening they made tea and generally had little parties, as their friends in turn looked in upon them. Still, they were not sorry when, on the fifth day after starting, Tientsin came in sight.

Their arrival excited the liveliest pleasure on the part of Mr. and Mrs. Bateman. Their aunt cried a good deal over the two girls whom at one time she believed she would never see again.

After the first excitement was over, and while the girls were giving their aunt a lively account of their adventures, Rex and his father discussed the question of the business.

"Your mother and I have been talking matters over," Mr. Bateman said. "It is absolutely certain that many months at any rate must pass before there is any revival of trade, and we have come to the conclusion that it would be useless for us to remain here. I should leave Thompson and the two clerks to keep the place open and look after things until your uncle and I agree that business can be started again. We shall, of course, take the girls with us, and I really don't see that there will be any use in your remaining. You have gone through a very exciting time, and a rest will do you good. What do you say yourself?"

"I am ready to do whatever you think best, Father. I

don't feel any the worse for the three months' excitement, but I think it would certainly be slow here if you were all gone. I suppose you will come out again yourself when things begin again."

"Certainly I shall, but I don't think your mother will. But, of course, all that we will chat over with your uncle. My own idea is that I shall come out with you for a couple of years, by which time you ought to know enough of the business to take charge of it, especially as Thompson is fairly well up in it. But, as I have said, all that is a matter for after-consideration. I feel that I have certainly earned a rest, having been out here ten years without a break. As for you, this will certainly be a dreary place for at least a year, for it will be two or three years before it entirely recovers from the blow. You will not be without something to do in England, because you will go into your uncle's office and will learn a good deal of the details of the business, price of the goods, and so on."

"Well, in that case, Father, I certainly think I should much rather go home with you. If I could be of any use here, I would willingly stop, but there can be no return of trade until a treaty has been made and the troops have all left the country, and that will be at least a year, perhaps a good deal more."

"Very well, then, that is settled. Just at present there are plenty of steamers going down to Shanghai, and I see no reason why we should not be off in a week. For many reasons I think the sooner we leave the better. The girls have gone through a terrible time for the past three or four months, and although they look better than could have been expected they must have been terribly shaken. Quiet and a long sea voyage will, I hope, set them up again. Shattered as the settlement is, goods may still be obtained, and I have

no doubt that they can get everything requisite for the voyage in the course of a week."

Accordingly, ten days later, Mr. and Mrs. Bateman, with their nieces, Rex, and Ah Lo—who refused positively Mr. Bateman's offer to set him up comfortably in a farm in his native village—sailed together for Europe.

THE END

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